



November 21, 2024

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Robert Rivas
Speaker of the Assembly
1021 O Street, Suite 8330
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Mike McGuire
Senate Pro Tem
1021 O Street, Suite 8610
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Scott D. Wiener
Chair, Senate Committee on Budget
1021 O Street, Suite 8360
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Jesse Gabriel
Chair, Assembly Committee on Budget
1021 O Street, Suite 5220
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RE: Urgent Action Needed To Address Extreme Heat and Build Community Resilience

Dear Governor Newsom, Speaker Rivas, Pro Tem McGuire, and Chairs Gabriel and Wiener,

On behalf of the over 100 undersigned organizations, representing environmental justice communities and allied organizations, **we are calling on state leaders to advance and invest in an integrated, multipronged approach to addressing extreme heat and to build holistic community resilience against climate catastrophes** (e.g. extreme heat, wildfires, power outages, critical infrastructure damage, wildfire smoke, and evacuations) **in the upcoming budget cycle and legislative session and beyond.**

Temperatures soared in places like the San Joaquin Valley and Eastern Coachella Valley this past summer, shattering previous heat records. Published in July 2024, a [California Department of Insurance report](#) found that seven extreme heat events from 2013 to 2022 killed nearly 460 Californians, led to 5,000 hospitalizations and resulted in nearly 344 adverse birth outcomes - many of the quantified costs fall on already overburdened racial and ethnic groups. Power outages, infrastructure damage, lost wages, agricultural impacts, and other consequences of these heat events have already cost the state nearly \$8 billion. Despite their growing significance, **equity**

programs targeting extreme heat and community resilience have been severely underfunded – making up less than 4% of the total funding in Proposition 4, the climate bond, as just one example.

As adverse, dangerous climate events grow in frequency and intensity, California's **emergency response is incomplete without advancing meaningful community resilience measures**, and investing sufficiently in the coordination systems, service delivery, and social cohesion and community trust needed before disasters occur. **The state must prioritize critical extreme heat and climate resilience programs and advance public policies that meet California's changing environmental conditions.** See attached for more information.

The time for urgent action is past due. Vulnerable communities deserve action and more than promises for more protections for climate and extreme weather events in the future. We strongly urge you to prioritize addressing extreme heat and community resilience investments and policies and to protect the health and well-being of vulnerable communities.

Sincerely,

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Priorities for Addressing California's Extreme Heat & Community Resilience Needs

California continues to fall short of making the decisions and investments necessary to protect communities from the worsening crisis of extreme heat and climate change. We champion policies and programs that support physical infrastructure, retrofits and construction, as well as social infrastructure, knowledge sharing, integrated service delivery, and meaningful engagement of our most overburdened and under-resourced residents.

1. Recognizing that climate crisis is a threat multiplier for inequality, **all environmental protections for extreme heat and climate adaptation strategies must build community resilience**, meaning we need to make sure our communities have the social and economic support needed to face the coming climate disasters.
 - For instance, if a multifamily building is hardened for extreme heat but these retrofits skyrocket rent prices and displace residents from their homes, that is not a community resilience strategy.
 - Current and future climate adaptation programs and policies must not only protect communities from several climate threats but also deliver economic relief and social support to effectively meet the multiple needs of communities as they face crises.
2. The State must maintain its commitment to the **Extreme Heat Action Plan (2022)** with goals to invest in social resilience, promote and fund nature-based solutions to reduce extreme heat risks, invest in cool buildings and surfaces, and support heat resilient and cooler communities.
3. Ensure that all new and existing single-family and multifamily residential buildings, including mobile homes and manufactured homes, can maintain a maximum safe indoor air temperature. New legislation should include requirements such as **mandatory building standards for safe maximum indoor air temperature** in newly constructed and existing dwelling units
4. **Create a Climate and Sustainability Insurance and Risk Reduction Program** designed to uplift disadvantaged communities where climate risks are disproportionately impacting our most vulnerable populations.

Priorities for Budgetary Action

While collectively California's support programs offer a multi-faceted defense against the record-breaking high heat temperatures when funded, the state has continued to divest completely from them (e.g. Community Resilience Centers, Transformative Climate Communities, Urban and Community Forestry Program) or significantly reduce their funding allocation (e.g. Equitable Building Decarbonization). In addition, these programs combined would receive less than four percent of the proposed resources bond funding, with the Equitable Building Decarbonization program excluded completely.

The state must prioritize and commit to sustaining investments in all of these programs that will face challenges in the coming fiscal years.

Importantly, the programs above not only offer protections from extreme weather events -- they also provide communities with multiple socioeconomic benefits alongside pollution reduction strategies, to build holistic community resilience.

Here are several programs that merit significant state investment:

- **Strategic Growth Council's (SGC) Community Resilience Centers (CRC) program:**
 - Ensures residents have access to trusted community spaces that provide much needed relief during times of crisis and year-round programming to support climate resilience
 - Round 1 was oversubscribed by 700%
 - In Round 1, only 27 out of 189 applications received funding
- **SGC's Transformative Climate Communities (TCC) program:**
 - Delivers multiple GHG emission-reducing strategies, like affordable solar-powered housing with access to clean public transit and active transportation
 - Requires "transformative plans" for community engagement, anti-displacement, workforce development and climate resilience
 - Across 5 rounds, only 10 out of 32 planning and project development applicants received implementation grants, indicating a robust pipeline of projects ripe for implementation
 - In Round 5, only 11 of 31 applications received funding
- **CAL FIRE's Urban and Community Forestry program:**

- The State's primary vehicle for delivering nature-based solutions for extreme heat – responsible for supporting the planting of thousands of trees across California over the last five decades and improving canopy cover in hundreds of disadvantaged communities that lack natural shade and green places to escape high heat.
- The last round of funding was oversubscribed by 500%
- **California Energy Commission's Equitable Building Decarbonization (EBD) program:**
 - Helps achieve the state's climate goals while ensuring that low- and moderate-income households are able to access crucial, holistic home upgrades and co-benefits such as lower energy bills and improved indoor air quality
 - At least 6 million low and moderate income homes will need support with decarbonization, at an estimate of \$12–25,000 per household
- **CNRA's Urban Greening Program:**
 - Utilizes nature-based solutions to transform the built environment into places that are more sustainable, enjoyable, and effective in creating vibrant communities
 - Oversubscribed by 300%
- **CAL FIRE's Green Schoolyards Program:**
 - Transforms K-12 schools and child care centers from concrete campuses to natural areas where our youth can enjoy outdoor learning and recreation supported by shade trees, playfields, and other green infrastructure that mitigates extreme heat and supports improved learning and human health.
 - Oversubscribed by 300% in its first round of funding
- **OPR's Extreme Heat and Community Resilience Program:**
 - Supports extreme heat interventions such as promoting evaporative cooling and offering public education to reduce the harm of extreme heat on our most vulnerable communities
- **HCD's Maximum Safe Indoor Air Temperature Standard and Policy:**
 - In addition to adopting a maximum safe indoor air temperature standard and policy (see principles and priorities above), the state will need to invest funding to ensure this policy is implemented through either existing or new programs.