

California Legislature

**Testimony at Joint Oversight Hearing: Senate Environmental Quality Committee & the Select Committee on
Climate Change and AB 32 Implementation**

**Thinking Globally, Acting Locally: The Paris Climate Accord and What it Means for California's Climate
Investments**

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Senator Wieckowski and Senator Pavley,

Thank you for the invitation to participate today. My name is Alvaro Sanchez, I'm the Environmental Equity Director at the Greenlining Institute. The Greenlining Institute is a 23 year old policy, research, organizing, and leadership institute working for racial and economic justice. The Environmental Equity team works to create a world in which all communities have clean air and water and where one's life expectancy is not determined by zip code, race or income. We do this by working on:

- Climate investments in disadvantaged communities
- The roll out of electric cars and trucks across the state
- Creating an inclusive clean energy economy

And

- Promoting integrated, neighborhood scale approaches to sustainability

California's multi-pronged effort for combating climate change charges polluters for the climate- and lung-damaging garbage they put into our air, but that's just the start. It's what we do with the money raised that truly changes the game.

We know which communities get hit first and worst by air pollution and climate change: Communities of color and low-income neighborhoods. That didn't happen by accident. For generations, communities of color were redlined and used as toxic dumping grounds for facilities like oil refineries and freeways that wealthier neighborhoods didn't want in their back yards. It's only fair that those communities receive the benefits of the growing clean-energy economy, from good jobs to healthier air.

California is making significant progress towards achieving this goal and we still have a long way to go to ensure the disadvantaged communities receive the necessary resources to fight poverty and pollution.

Something amazing is happening in California and the world is watching.

Thanks in large part to your leadership on climate issues, California is leading the nation and the world on how we address climate change. This much was clear by the interest and respect that the California delegation commanded at the UN Climate Summit in Paris. California was not only the case study that received the most

attention for what other governments and subnationals can do to fight climate change; it was also the inspiration that many used to describe what can be possible.

For this reason we have a tremendous responsibility to our communities that we get things right here and that the models we share improves the lives of impacted communities everywhere.

I heard from colleagues from developing nations that our approach to climate investments in disadvantaged communities is particularly important because they find many similarities between the conditions that residents in disadvantaged communities face and those of people living in developing nations.

To learn how disadvantaged communities fared in the first year on climate investments, The Greenlining Institute conducted a study of 10 projects funded by greenhouse gas reduction funds. Our findings show that California is on its way to delivering climate investments that achieve multiple benefits.

In addition to providing clear environmental benefits, when completed these 10 projects alone will provide:

- Over 2,000 solar power systems for low-income families generating nearly six megawatts of clean power
- Plant 2,250 trees in disadvantaged communities
- Provide 252 homes permanently-affordable to lower income households
- Create over 400 jobs
- Replace 600 old, highly polluting cars and trucks with clean electric or plug-in hybrid vehicles.

This data is just from 10 projects. Consider the impact that we can achieve after just a few years of program implementation if we continue to deliver projects like those in highlighted in our research.

Moving forward the second three year investment plan keeps California on the right track of fighting poverty and pollution.

The new investment plan recognizes the value of programs that were in the first three year investment plan by retaining them as strategies to meet our climate goals. These programs include, low-carbon transportation, community greening, low-income energy programs, public transit and sustainable communities among others.

The Second Investment plan also makes significant additions that are worth noting.

- Integrated Projects is included as a concept that deserves our attention. Supporting projects that integrate multiple, cross-cutting approaches to reduce greenhouse gas emissions has the potential for catalytic impact at the neighborhood scale while also increasing job opportunities, economic, health and environmental benefits.
- We are also happy to see the inclusion of short lived climate pollutants in the investment plan as an opportunity to lessen global and local climate change impacts while improving the air quality and health in communities most impacted by local sources of air pollution.

Concepts that we support but did not make the final draft of the plan and we hope will make future iterations of the investment plan include industrial ecology for greening up small businesses, Free transit Passes for low-income riders, Green Active Transportation Networks, and Bike Infrastructure and Rebates.

In closing I'd like to go back to California's leadership on this issue on a world stage. Because of how important our role is and because we have a responsibility to the communities that are most impacted in our state. We need to get this right.

While we have achieved great success there is a lot more to be done.

Disadvantaged communities still lack the necessary resources to mitigate pollution impacts. We must do a lot more to provide relief to these communities, which are hit first and worst by climate change.

- Currently, only 10% of the GGRF is required to be allocated to address the needs of the 25% most impacted communities in California. This is simply not enough.
- For this reason we support AB 1550 introduced by Assemblymember Jimmy Gomez and look forward to working with the Senate to strengthen SB 535.

We also need to assure community stakeholders that climate investment programs work and are reliable.

- The funding pause we are experiencing right now for many programs that only received partial funding or no funding at all in fiscal year 2015-2016 is creating a lot of uncertainty and questions about the entire climate investment program.
- This unnecessary pause has only increased the feeling that communities are being left out from receiving benefits from our climate policies.

Across all programs we still need a lot of work to incentivize achieving multiple co-benefits and adopting anti-displacement strategies.

- While reducing greenhouse gases is the primary goal of our climate investments our model for delivering triple-bottom-line benefits that promote people, planet and prosperity is the reason why California's model is worth replicating across the globe.

We need to make it easier for community stakeholders to learn about climate investments and to participate in their benefits.

- We encourage state programs to work across agencies to bundle customer facing benefits like electric vehicle incentives, weatherization upgrades, and low-income solar as well as to provide an easy to use universal application that can qualify folks for all benefits they are eligible for.
- We must also make sure that the clean energy economy develops in a manner that is inclusive and representative of California's growing diverse population. Let's not repeat the lack of diversity in the tech sector.
- And we need better tools to communicate our success. I encourage you to visit UpliftCA.org a project of the Greenlining Institute and our allies that communicates real life benefits from California's climate policies.