



ALAMEDA COUNTY HEALTH CARE SERVICES AGENCY  
PUBLIC HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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February 21, 2017

Matthew Rodriquez, Secretary  
California Environmental Protection Agency

Mary Nichols, Board Chair  
California Air Resources Board  
1001 I Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 1550 Implementation and California Climate Investments Funding Guidelines

Dear Secretary Rodriquez and Chair Nichols:

I am writing to share comments regarding SB 535 and AB 1550 Implementation and Cap and Trade Auction Proceeds Funding Guidelines from California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) and California Air Resources Board (CARB) to Agencies that Administer California Climate Investments. As Health Officer for Alameda County, I am responsible for monitoring the health status of all our communities and advising on the policies and actions needed to reduce health risks in vulnerable communities, while improving health and well-being for all communities in Alameda County. SB 535 and AB 1550 present a great opportunity for a triple win: to decrease greenhouse gas emissions, reduce health disparities and maximize health benefits to communities disproportionately impacted in California. I recommend utilizing a mixed threshold approach (described below) or a 30% threshold for CalEnviroScreen (CES) 3.0, using high-poverty or HCD's definition of low-income communities and funding guidelines that are inclusive of and maximize benefits to high risk communities.

### **CalEnviroScreen 3.0 Thresholds**

The Alameda County Public Health Department identifies "high-risk" communities as census tracts with high poverty ( $\geq 20\%$  of people living in poverty) and low life expectancy (bottom quartile) because they are especially vulnerable to and heavily impacted by cumulative health risks. These communities are overburdened by social, economic, and environmental risks and in need of investments that improve health and neighborhood conditions. Using CES 3.0 and a 25% threshold fails to identify a large proportion of these "high-risk" communities throughout the state (41% of "high-risk" communities in California, 57% in Alameda County, 60% in the Bay Area, 44% in the Inland Empire, 20% in Los Angeles County, and 21% in San Joaquin Valley). Many of these "high-risk" communities would be limited in eligibility for only the minimum 10% of California Climate investments for "low-income" communities versus the minimum 25% available for CES 3.0 "disadvantaged" communities, unless Agencies opt to fund above "low-income community" minimum requirements.

In my previous comment letter to OEHHA in October 2016, I recommended a mixed threshold approach, which basically expands the definition of DACs to include communities that meet at least one of the following three criteria: 1) the top quartile from the overall CES 3.0 score state ranking; 2) the top quartile ranking for Population Characteristics and >25% ranking for Pollution Burden; or 3) the top quartile ranking for Pollution Burden and >50% ranking for Population Characteristics. This results in more inclusive and meaningful identification of just over 30% of census tracts in California as a DAC. If this mixed threshold approach is not accepted, I recommend adopting the 30% threshold for CES 3.0 because it is more inclusive of “high-risk” communities in Alameda County and throughout the state.

### **Identifying Low-income Communities**

I recommend the use of “high poverty” to define low-income communities, as it simply takes into account income, household size and cost of living, and is calculated based on relatively available poverty data. It is a well-established community-level indicator that strongly correlates with health outcomes. Alternatively, I support the HCD definition of low-income as it incorporates cost of living, takes into account household size and is more inclusive of “high risk” census tracts than using the statewide median income solely for identifying low-income communities. Regarding how to define low-income communities within ½ mile of a DAC, I recommend that projects in low-income census tracts that are within or touch the half mile buffer of a DAC be eligible as this will be more inclusive of “high risk” communities throughout the state. Furthermore, I recommend providing an interactive map for the public to identify which communities will be considered to be within the ½ mile buffer of DACs.

### **ARB Funding Guidelines**

The ARB Funding Guidelines should ensure accountability and that the Agencies have detailed information to report to the Legislature, require project recipients to demonstrate that they avoid and mitigate burdens on DACs and low-income communities, ensure they offer a majority of benefits to DACs and low-income communities and report on the benefits to DACs and low-income communities using disaggregated data and metrics appropriate to the project type and support the program objectives. I also recommend the following regarding specific project types:

- For large stationary projects, such as an affordable housing development, require that a majority of the project is located within the boundaries of DACs or low-income communities and demonstrate that the project creates affordable rental or home ownership opportunities to a majority of (at least 50%) low and very low-income households.
  - For transit projects, require that the majority of the project or route/ transit stops are within walking distance (half mile) of DACs or low-income communities and increases ridership and benefits, such as reduced fares to a majority of low-income or DAC transit riders. Running a transit project through a DAC does not necessarily mean it provides substantial, direct and meaningful benefits to DACs or low-income communities. The project may not necessarily benefit a DAC or low-income community if there are barriers to ridership; for example, if fares are not affordable, safety issues keep people from riding transit or routes do not match the residents’ needs.
  - For active transportation projects, require that the majority of the project is within walking distance (half mile) of a DAC or low-income community and demonstrate increased access and physical activity to a majority of low-income communities or DACs.
  - For vehicle programs, require that the project reduce at least 50% of emissions in a DAC or low-income community and demonstrate this geographically by showing routes, vehicle or equipment area designations and emissions calculations or estimations. This ensures that projects provide meaningful benefits directly to DACs or low-income communities.
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Thank you for considering my recommendations in order to ensure that the implementation of AB 1550 truly reduces burdens and maximize benefits to vulnerable and disproportionately impacted communities in Alameda County and throughout the state. Please feel forward to contact Anna Lee at [anna.lee@acgov.org](mailto:anna.lee@acgov.org) should you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Muntu Davis MD, MPH".

Muntu Davis, MD, MPH  
Health Officer, Alameda County