

STATE CAPITOL
P.O. BOX 942849
SACRAMENTO, CA 94249-0058
(916) 319-2058
FAX 916-319-2158

DISTRICT OFFICE
8255 FIRESTONE BLVD, SUITE 203
DOWNEY, CA 90241
(562) 861-5803
FAX (562) 861-5158



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CHAIR, BUDGET SUBCOMMITTEE # 5
ON PUBLIC SAFETY

May 18, 2021

The Honorable Anthony Rendon
Speaker, California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 219
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Toni Atkins
Pro Tem, California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 205
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Phil Ting
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 6026
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Nancy Skinner
Chair, Senate Budget & Fiscal Review
Committee
State Capitol, Room 5094
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Richard Bloom
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee 3
State Capitol, Room 2003
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Bob Wieckowski
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee 2
State Capitol, Room 4085
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Request for \$400 Million for Urban Forestry & Urban Greening

Dear Speaker Rendon, Pro Tem Atkins, Assemblymember Ting, Assemblymember Bloom, Senator Skinner, and Senator Wieckowski,

As members that represents areas of the state that are most vulnerable to extreme heat and least equipped to handle and mitigate its impacts, we write to request an appropriation of \$400 million for urban forestry and greening in this year's Budget Act, with \$200 million of that amount allocated to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire) for the Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program, and the other \$200 million allocated to the California Natural Resources Agency (Resources Agency) for the Urban Greening Program, to ensure communities across the state are resilient to a disaster that is slowly but surely approaching.

In the Global Risks Assessment released annually by the World Economic Forum, extreme weather has been identified as one of the five most probable global risks every year since 2014, and as one of the five that will have the biggest impact every year since 2017. Extreme heat events are already happening and taking their toll. Southern California is the only place in the world where heat related deaths occur during winter months; and recently, even parts of Northern California, including communities in the Bay Area, where temperatures have historically been cooler and homes are typically not equipped with air conditioning, are starting to feel the heat, as temperatures climb to unbearably higher highs with each passing year. Absent thoughtful and preemptive state action, these events and their impacts on communities are only going to worsen, increasing in both frequency and severity, and threatening public health, infrastructure, agriculture, and our limited water and energy resources.

Both the Urban and Community Forestry Program administered by CalFire, and the Urban Greening Program administered by the Resources Agency, support projects that develop urban green infrastructure in communities, that produce multiple air and water quality and energy use reduction benefits, while building long-term resiliency to extreme heat. However, despite the success of these programs and the benefits they have delivered to many communities, there is still a significant disparity in the presence of urban green infrastructure across the state, and some communities, including many of the ones that we represent, have noticeably fewer trees and less greenspace than others. Some of these communities are also already in hotter areas of the state to begin with and are likely to be disproportionately impacted by rising temperatures.

Because of this, and in acknowledgement that both of the Urban and Community Forestry Program and the Urban Greening Program have been oversubscribed by 100-400% every year over the last decade, we request an investment of \$200 million to support each of these programs, for a total investment of \$400 million to prepare for and respond to the imminent extreme heat emergency.

This state has been stuck in a vicious cycle of dedicating the majority of its resources each year to respond to the biggest disaster at the time the budget is crafted, leaving little behind for strategic investments that have the greatest potential to make a difference in preventing and reducing impacts from disasters that we know are coming. Investing in urban forestry and greening is the single most effective way to mitigate the impacts of extreme heat, while also producing other climate adaptation and resiliency benefits, but we also know that it takes time for urban forestry and greening efforts to realize their full potential. This is why we can't wait until the impacts of extreme heat can no longer be ignored before taking action and making the investments necessary to address them.

The state is fortunate to have such an immense budgetary surplus, that for the first time in decades, it faces a potential limitation on spending that was established in 1979. Additionally, because the "Gann Limit" does not apply to certain types of capital outlay, including investments in urban forestry and greening, the state is uniquely positioned to break this cycle and can meaningfully invest in building long-term resiliency to extreme heat, without it coming at the expense of investments that are immediately needed.

For these reasons, we respectfully request an investment of \$400 million for urban forestry and urban greening, with \$200 million to CalFire for the Urban and Community Greening Program, and \$200 million to the Resources Agency for Urban Greening Program, to ensure we capitalize on an important opportunity build resiliency to extreme heat when it can have the biggest impact.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Cristina Garcia
Chair, California Legislative Women's Caucus
Assemblymember, 58th District

Lorena Gonzalez
Assemblymember, District 80

Autumn Burke
Assemblymember, 62nd District

Assemblymember Kevin McCarty
Assemblymember, 6th District

Ash Kalra
Assemblymember, 27th District

Eloise Gomez Reyes
Assemblymember, 47th District