

Date of Hearing: April 22, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Buffy Wicks, Chair

AB 1584 (Jackson) – As Introduced January 13, 2026

Policy Committee: Judiciary

Vote: 9 - 3

Urgency: No

State Mandated Local Program: No

Reimbursable: No

SUMMARY:

This bill establishes an Office of Civil Rights within the California Air Resources Board (CARB). The bill tasks the office with providing civil rights training to board staff, grantees, contractors, and subrecipients; developing a civil rights evaluation tool; ensuring language access and culturally appropriate outreach in public engagement processes; and coordinating civil rights compliance efforts with local air districts and CalEPA. The bill requires CARB to post an annual summary of civil rights complaints, compliance efforts, and outreach activities. Implementation is contingent upon an appropriation by the Legislature.

FISCAL EFFECT:

Potential significant costs (Air Pollution Control Fund). CARB anticipates costs of \$1.5 in budget year and ongoing for the following:

- 1) Eight permanent positions, including a civil rights supervisor to manage the office and oversee compliance efforts; staff to develop and maintain a civil rights evaluation tool; staff to develop and deliver civil rights training to CARB employees, grantees, contractors, and subrecipients; staff to investigate and track civil rights complaints and produce annual complaint and compliance summaries; and staff to provide language access services, including translation, interpretation, multilingual staffing, and multilingual public materials, and to maintain the office's civil rights webpage. CARB also identifies the need for staff to lead coordination with air pollution control districts, air quality management districts, and CalEPA on statewide civil rights compliance.
- 2) \$132,000 ongoing annually in administrative costs for personnel, facilities, asset management, and health and safety support.
- 3) \$170,000 for desktop support services, IT procurement, and development and maintenance of the civil rights webpage and evaluation tool.
- 4) \$229,000 for legal review and support of civil rights investigations and compliance activities.

COMMENTS:

- 1) **Purpose.** According to the author:

Black and Latino Californians bear a disproportionate burden of air pollution exposure, the result of decades of inequitable land use policies, discriminatory zoning, and the systematic placement of freeways, industrial facilities, and waste sites near communities of color. Meaningful representation is not a courtesy, it is a democratic obligation. CARB must reflect the diversity of the state it serves, through the appointment of board members and staff with deep roots in frontline communities, outreach conducted in multiple languages, and engagement embedded in trusted local institutions. The people most harmed by pollution have the clearest stake in the solutions, and until their voices carry real weight within the agency, California's environmental policies will continue to fall short of the equity they promise.

- 2) **Background.** In 2020, a group of Black employees at CARB submitted a letter to agency leadership alleging systematic bias and disparate treatment of Black employees, including a disproportionately white workforce, dismissal of minority staff contributions, and inadequate recruitment of a diverse workforce. In response, CARB adopted Resolution 20-33, establishing an explicit commitment to racial equity, and created the Office of Racial Equity and the Diversity and Racial Equity Task Force. CARB has since partnered with UC Santa Cruz and USC to develop a multi-year Racial Equity Inventory and a Racial Equity Lens evaluation tool for use in agency decision-making. CARB's organizational structure already includes several units whose functions may overlap with the office this bill would create, including the existing Civil Rights Office — currently staffed by only three employees — the Office of Racial Equity, and the Office of Environmental Justice, Tribal Affairs, and Border Relations. The bill does not address how the proposed Office of Civil Rights would relate to these existing units — whether it would consolidate, supplement, or supersede their functions. The author may wish to clarify this relationship, particularly given the budget constraints facing the state.

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