SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 1600 (Arambula) - Disadvantaged communities: farmworker communities

Version: March 17, 2026
Urgency: No
Hearing Date: August 3, 2026

Policy Vote: E.Q. 7 - 0
Mandate: No
Consultant: Ashley Ames

Bill Summary: This bill would expand the definition of "disadvantaged communities" (DACs) in the Health and Safety Code by explicitly authorizing the inclusion of farmworker communities that meet certain requirements.

Fiscal Impact:

- The Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) estimates ongoing costs of $205,000 annually and one-time costs of $300,0000 (likely General Fund) to implement the provisions of this bill and support the initial incorporation of farmworker communities into CalEnviroScreen (CES) and the DAC designation. This would involve support for CES methods development, identification and integration of appropriate data sets if available, and for engagement with environmental justice and farmworker communities.
- The California Air Resources Board (CARB) estimates ongoing costs of approximately $779,000 (Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund [GGRF] or other fund) to hire staff to implement this bill in coordination with CalEPA. Current law requires CARB to develop funding guidelines and include guidance to agencies that administer "California Climate Investments" (CCI) programs on how to maximize benefits to DACs. CARB also develops criteria and tools to ensure administering agencies accurately report the benefits of GGRF-funded projects to priority populations. ARB is also responsible for conducting outreach in DACs to inform community members about investment opportunities available through CCIs. Therefore, CARB contends it would require dedicated staff to update existing materials, develop new materials specific to farmworker communities, provide guidance to administering agencies as they navigate reporting under the updated DAC criteria, and engage in outreach and engagement with farmworker communities.
- The California Department of Community Services and Development (CSD) and the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) anticipate minor and absorbable costs to consult with CalEPA.

Background:

CalEnviroScreen. CES is a science-based mapping tool developed by OEHHA and CalEPA to help identify California communities most affected by multiple sources of pollution, as well as communities that may be especially vulnerable to the effects of pollution. The state uses the tool to, among other things, identify California's most environmentally burdened and vulnerable communities; assist CalEPA's boards and departments with decisions involving grant allocations and prioritization of resources and cleanup activities; and target GGRF dollars to DACs. CES 4.0, released in October 2021, is the most current version of the tool, although OEHHA announced in January 2026 the release of a draft CES 5.0 update.

CCIs. Since 2014, the Legislature has appropriated billions of dollars in CCIs – funded by auction proceeds from the state's cap-and-invest program, deposited into GGRF – to fund projects that reduce harmful emissions, protect public health, strengthen local economies, and support natural environments. State law targets a portion of these investments to DACs by requiring CalEPA to identify DACs and mandating the allocation of 35% of GGRF dollars to DACs, low-income communities, and low-income households.

Farmworkers. Surveys of California's farmworkers reveal they face major challenges, including pesticide exposure, poverty, educational barriers, linguistic isolation, housing and food insecurity, difficult working conditions, groundwater threats, and poor healthcare access. A number of these factors are captured as indicators in CES, suggesting that farmworker communities may be at the nexus of many of the pollution and socioeconomic indicators the state uses to identify DACs.

Low-Income Weatherization Program (LIWP). LIWP reduces household energy costs and greenhouse gas emissions by funding energy efficiency upgrades and rooftop solar photovoltaic systems, at no cost to low-income households. Since its inception in 2014, LIWP has received funding from GGRF and the General Fund, and, most recently, the Proposition 4 climate bond authorized the issuance of $10 million to the Farmworker Housing Component of LIWP. The LIWP Farmworker Housing Component focuses on the direct installation of energy efficiency measures and solar photovoltaic systems for eligible farmworker households at no cost to the household. The LIWP Farmworker Housing Component is administered by La Cooperativa Campesina de California and currently provides services in 18 counties that have the highest farmworker populations. According to CSD, this program does not use CES to determine project or household eligibility. The 2021, 2022, and 2023 budget acts appropriated a combined $105 million in GGRF and General Fund resources to support the Farmworker Housing and Multifamily Housing Components of LIWP.

Proposed Law: This bill would expand the definition of DACs in the Health and Safety Code by explicitly authorizing the inclusion of farmworker communities that meet certain requirements.

Specifically, this bill would:

1. Authorize the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) — as part of an existing requirement to identify DACs for Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) investment opportunities — to include farmworker communities that would meet the following requirements: a) The communities would be located in geographic areas with a significant presence of agricultural workers, particularly those engaged in seasonal or migrant labor. b) Residents in the communities would be disproportionately exposed to environmental pollutants related to agricultural or industrial operations.

2. Require CalEPA, in consultation with the California Department of Community Services and Development (CSD) and the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), to revise applicable screening tools and guidance documents to ensure the inclusion of farmworker communities as DACs in all relevant program eligibility determinations and benefit calculations.

Related Legislation:

SB 867 (Allen, Chapter 83, Statutes of 2024) enacted the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024, which, once approved by voters (via Prop 4), authorized the issuance of bonds in the amount of $10 billion, including $10 million for the Farmworker Housing Component of the LIWP.

AB 1232 (Gloria, Chapter 754, Statutes of 2019) directed the Department of Community Services and Development (CSD), by January 1, 2021, to provide an action plan that, among other things, ensures greater cross-referral between public health agencies, CDPH's Office of Health Equity, and the LIWP for comprehensive energy and healthy home improvements for low-income multifamily residents in disadvantaged communities.

AB 2715 (E. Garcia, 2016) would have directed CSD to develop and administer an Agricultural Working Poor Energy Efficient Housing Program to improve energy efficiency in farmworker-owned housing. This bill died in this committee.

AB 862 (Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review, Chapter 36, Statutes of 2014) required CSD to develop and administer LIWP.

AB 32 (Núñez, Chapter 488, Statutes of 2006) requires, among other things, that CARB ensure that greenhouse gas emission reduction rules, regulations, programs, mechanisms, and incentives under its jurisdiction direct public and private investment toward the most disadvantaged communities in California and provide an opportunity for small businesses, schools, affordable housing associations, and other community institutions to participate in and benefit from statewide efforts to reduce emissions.

-- END --