
THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 1600
Author: Arambula (D)
Amended: 8/13/26 in Senate
Vote: 21

SENATE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY COMMITTEE: 7-0, 7/1/26
AYES: Blakespear, Valladares, Allen, Dahle, Gonzalez, Hurtado, Menjivar

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 7-0, 8/13/26
AYES: Cervantes, Seyarto, Cabaldon, Dahle, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 60-10, 5/26/26 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: Disadvantaged communities: farmworker communities

SOURCE: Author

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

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF), and requires all moneys collected by the California Air Resources Board (CARB) under the state's Cap-and-Invest Program to be deposited into the GGRF. (Government Code (GOV) § 16428.8)
- 2) Provides that it is the intent of the Legislature that GGRF moneys shall only be appropriated in a manner consistent with state laws governing the GGRF, including the GGRF Investment Plan and Communities Revitalization Act. (Health and Safety Code (HSC) § 39712(a)(1))

- 3) Requires the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) to identify disadvantaged communities for GGRF investment opportunities; requires these communities to be identified based on geographic, socioeconomic, public health, and environmental hazard criteria; provides that the criteria may include, but are not limited to, either of the following:
 - a) Areas disproportionately affected by environmental pollution and other hazards that can lead to negative public health effects, exposure, or environmental degradation; and,
 - b) Areas with concentrations of people that are of low-income, high unemployment, low levels of homeownership, high rent burden, sensitive populations, or low levels of educational attainment. (HSC § 39711)
- 4) Requires that the GGRF investment plan allocate a minimum of 25% of GGRF moneys to projects located within the boundaries of, and benefiting individuals living in, disadvantaged communities identified by CalEPA, as specified:
 - a) a minimum of 5% to projects that benefit low-income households or to projects located within the boundaries of, and benefiting individuals living in, low-income communities located anywhere in the state; and
 - b) a minimum of 5% to projects that either benefit low-income households that are outside of, but within one-half mile of, disadvantaged communities, or to projects located within the boundaries of, and benefiting individuals living in, low-income communities that are outside of, but within one-half mile of, disadvantaged communities. (HSC § 39713(a-c))
- 5) Requires CARB to ensure that greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reduction rules, regulations, programs, mechanisms, and incentives under its jurisdiction, where applicable and to the extent feasible, 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 GHG emissions. (HSC § 38565)
- 6) Establishes the California Department of Community Services and Development (CSD) to provide services to impoverished communities, including overseeing federal block grants, funding and technical assistance to community action agencies, coordinate antipoverty efforts, and plan and evaluate long-range and short-range strategies for overcoming poverty in the state. (GOV § 12085 *et seq.*)

- 7) Requires the CSD to develop and administer the Energy Efficiency Low-Income Weatherization Program (LIWP); authorizes CSD to develop requirements, guidelines, and subgrantee contract provisions for LIWP, as specified; requires, before a subgrantee contract is executed for the provision of local service, CSD to post draft program guidelines on CSD's website and to hold a public hearing to obtain public input on the draft program guidelines, as specified. (GOV § 12087.5)
- 8) Requires that \$10 million of Proposition (Prop) 4 funds be made available, upon appropriation by the Legislature, as part of the Farmworker Housing Component of LIWP, to low-income farmworker households for no-cost energy efficiency upgrades designed to reduce GHG emissions by saving energy; requires that these upgrades include, but are not limited to, insulation, central heating and cooling system upgrades, lighting upgrades, and window replacement. (Public Resources Code (PRC) § 93580)

This bill:

- 1) Adds, to existing state law that requires CalEPA to identify disadvantaged communities for GGRF investment opportunities based on specified criteria, an authorization for CalEPA to include farmworker communities that meet both of the following:
 - a) The communities are located in geographic areas with a significant presence of agricultural workers, particularly those engaged in seasonal or migrant labor; and,
 - b) Residents in the communities are disproportionately exposed to environmental pollutants related to agricultural or industrial operations.
- 2) Allows CalEPA to use data from CSD regarding farmworker communities to identify all relevant communities.

Background

The Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund. The GGRF was created in the 2012 budget (SB 1018, Budget Committee, Chapter 39, Statutes of 2012) to use funds collected from Cap-and-Invest auctions to further the goals in the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (AB 32, Nunez, Chapter 488, Statutes of 2006). GGRF funds essential programs such as the Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Program,

the Community Air Protection Program, wildfire and forest resilience, and the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Program.¹

State law established under SB 535 (De León, Chapter 830, Statutes of 2012) and AB 1550 (Gomez, Chapter 369, Statutes of 2016) targets a portion of these investments to frontline communities, by requiring CalEPA to identify disadvantaged communities and mandating the allocation of 35% of GGRF dollars to disadvantaged communities, low-income communities, and low-income households, which the state collectively refers to as priority populations. Priority populations include all of the following:

- a) Disadvantaged communities, comprised of:
 - i) The top 25% of census tracts experiencing disproportionate amounts of pollution, environmental degradation, and socioeconomic and public health conditions according to CalEnviroScreen (described below);
 - ii) Census tracts lacking overall scores in CalEnviroScreen due to data gaps, but receiving the highest 5% of CalEnviroScreen “Pollution Burden” composite scores;
 - iii) Census tracts identified in 2017 as disadvantaged, regardless of their CalEnviroScreen scores; and,
 - iv) Lands under the control of federally recognized Tribes.
- b) Low-income communities and households, which have incomes either at or below 80% of the statewide median, or below a threshold designated as “low-income” by the California Department of Housing and Community Development.

Farmworker communities. California farmworkers face major challenges, including pesticide exposure, poverty, educational barriers, linguistic isolation, housing and food insecurity, difficult working conditions, and poor healthcare access. As noted above, a number of these factors are captured as indicators in CalEnviroScreen, suggesting that farmworker communities may be at the nexus of many of the pollution and socioeconomic indicators that the state uses to identify disadvantaged communities.

In a 2022 study, researchers from the University of California, Riverside state that pesticides “contribute to poor health conditions among farmworkers who have considerably higher exposure to pesticides than non-agricultural workers,

¹ LAO (2025) *Overview of New Updates to The Cap-and-Invest Program*, <https://lao.ca.gov/Publications/Report/5097>

increasing their risk for skin disease, vision problems, and respiratory-associated illness.”²

In 2022, the United States Department of Labor released "California Findings from the National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS) 2015-2019" which found that 96% of California farmworkers were Hispanic, 84% could not speak English well or at all, 35% lived in crowded dwellings, and the average income was less than \$25,000.³ Another 2022 survey conducted by CDPH and UC Merced found that 42% of California farmworkers reported very low or low food security, more than one third reported difficulties keeping their home cool, 40 to 50% had health testing indicating pre-diabetes, diabetes, or chronic inflammatory conditions, and nearly half did not have health insurance at some point in the last 12 months.⁴

The Low-Income Weatherization Program. Funded by GGRF, LIWP reduces household energy costs and GHG emissions by funding energy efficiency upgrades and rooftop solar photovoltaic systems, at no cost to low-income households.⁵ Since its inception in 2014, LIWP has received funding from GGRF, the state's General Fund, and, most recently, Prop 4, the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024, which authorized the issuance of \$10 million to the Farmworker Housing Component of LIWP.

Farmworker families spend a larger share of their annual income on home energy and often cut back on other critical needs to pay their energy bills. Launched in 2019, the LIWP Farmworker Housing Component provides services to low-income farmworker households and is administered by La Cooperativa Campesina de California to install energy saving and solar measures in single-family dwellings and buildings of 2-4 units of eligible farmworker households.⁶

Comments

² Cheney, A.M., et al. (2022) *The intersection of workplace and environmental exposure on health in Latinx farm working communities in rural inland southern California*, International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9566176/>

³ US Department of Labor (2022) *California Findings from the National Agricultural Workers Survey*. <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/research/publications/findings-national-agricultural-workers-survey-naws-2015-2019>

⁴ UC Merced (2023) *Community and Labor Center's New Study Highlights Farmworkers' Health Challenges*. <https://news.ucmerced.edu/news/2023/community-and-labor-centers-new-study-highlights-farmworkers-health-challenges>

⁵ CSD, *Low-Income Weatherization Program*. <https://www.csd.ca.gov/Pages/Low-Income-Weatherization-Program.aspx>

⁶ CSD, *Farmworker Housing Energy Efficiency and Solar PV*. <https://www.csd.ca.gov/Pages/Farmworker-Housing-Component.aspx>

Purpose of Bill. According to the author, “Farmworkers make essential contributions to California and our economy. Their efforts help to feed the state, nation, and the world, while their contributions have made California’s agricultural sector a \$49 million dollar industry that generates \$100 million dollars in related economic activity. Even as farmworkers actively contribute so much to our state, they simultaneously confront the compounding burdens of extreme heat, pesticide exposure, substandard housing, and environmental degradation.

“California’s climate investment framework specifically exists to support communities that face such challenges, and the disadvantaged communities designation (DAC) was implemented to prioritize their ability to receive funding from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF). However, under the current framework, many rural and unincorporated farmworker communities consistently fall outside the eligibility boundaries this tool identifies, even though it is well documented that these communities face multifaceted socioeconomic and environmental burdens. AB 1600 resolves this gap by expressly designating farmworker communities as DACs, giving them access to vital funding to improve infrastructure and the quality of life.”

Current representation of farmworkers in CalEnviroScreen. Understanding that the agricultural industry is essential for California’s food security and economy, farmworker communities deserve additional support. While the bill provides this support by adding farmworker communities to the definition of disadvantaged communities, the bill does not revise the applicable screening tool: CalEnviroScreen. Several indicators used by CalEnviroScreen to identify disadvantaged communities overlap with the difficulties faced by farmworker communities: pesticide use, asthma, educational attainment, housing burden, linguistic isolation, and poverty. However, most of these indicators fall under “Population characteristic indicators” whereas pesticide use is just one consideration under “Pollution burden indicators.” Therefore, it’s possible that communities with substantial exposure to pesticide use, in the absence of other forms of pollution, may not be identified by CalEnviroScreen. Additionally, farmworker communities are further at risk due to lack of access to healthcare,⁷ extreme heat exposure,⁷ energy burden,⁷ and immigration status.⁸ These data points are not currently considered under CalEnviroScreen.

⁷ Borunda, A (2026) *A California study has lessons for efforts to protect workers from excessive heat*, NPR. <https://www.npr.org/2026/01/01/nx-s1-5660893/california-study-protect-workers-from-excessive-heat>

⁸ Valenzuela, L. (2025) *‘They still need care’: Why California migrant workers are avoiding medical clinics*, CalMatters. <https://calmatters.org/economy/2025/12/immigrant-farmworker-medical-clinic/>

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: No

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee:

- Cost pressures likely in the hundreds of thousands or low millions of dollars annually (General Fund or Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund) for the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, California Air Resources Board, and other state entities to incorporate farmworker communities into the DAC designation as encouraged by this bill.

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/13/26)

California Human Development
Center for Employment Training
Central Valley Opportunity Center
LA Cooperativa Campesina De California
Los Amigos De LA Comunidad, INC.
Proteus INC.

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/13/26)

None received

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 60-10, 5/26/26

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Connolly, Elhawary, Fong, Gabriel, Gallagher, Garcia, Gipson, Mark González, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lee, Lowenthal, Macedo, McKinnor, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Valencia, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NOES: Davies, Dixon, Ellis, Hadwick, Hoover, Johnson, Patterson, Sanchez, Ta, Tangipa

NO VOTE RECORDED: Alanis, Castillo, Chen, DeMaio, Flora, Jeff Gonzalez, Lackey, Muratsuchi, Celeste Rodriguez, Wallis

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8/17/26 10:38:02

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