

CONCURRENCE IN SENATE AMENDMENTS

AB 1600 (Arambula)

As Amended August 21, 2026

Majority vote

SUMMARY

Requires the California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) to assess whether designating farmworker communities as disadvantaged communities would increase their access to Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF) investment opportunities, publicly post its findings, and consider these findings when identifying disadvantaged communities.

Senate Amendments

- 1) Delete an authorization for CalEPA to identify disadvantaged communities based on their status as farmworker communities, as specified.
- 2) Require CalEPA to do all of the following:
 - a) Assess whether designating farmworker communities as disadvantaged communities would increase their access to GGRF investment opportunities;
 - b) Determine, in consultation with the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA), whether there are public statewide data of sufficient quality and spatial granularity that would allow for the identification of areas that have a significant presence of farmworker communities, especially those engaged in seasonal or migrant labor; and,
 - c) Identify potential barriers faced by low-income farmworker communities in accessing GGRF investment opportunities, including, but not limited to, potential barriers based on eligibility criteria or lack of technical support in accessing funding.
- 3) Require CalEPA to publicly post, on its internet website, findings from the work described above and to consider these findings in identifying disadvantaged communities, as specified.
- 4) Require CalEPA and OEHHA to develop and implement a strategy for engaging with farmworker communities on environmental, health, and socioeconomic burdens, as specified; authorizes this strategy to include conducting outreach and engagement with farmworker communities, and with entities that serve or conduct research on farmworker communities, including, but not limited to community-based organizations, academic or public research institutions, and governmental agencies.

COMMENTS

California Climate Investments, GGRF, and investments in priority populations: Since 2014, the Legislature has appropriated billions of dollars in California Climate Investments—funded by auction proceeds from the state's Cap-and-Invest Program, deposited into the GGRF—to fund projects that reduce harmful emissions, protect public health, strengthen local economies, and support natural environments.

State law established under Senate Bill SB 535 (De León, Chapter 830, Statutes of 2012) and Assembly Bill 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. Disadvantaged communities are comprised of:

- 1) The top 25% of census tracts experiencing disproportionate amounts of pollution, environmental degradation, and socioeconomic and public health conditions according to CalEnviroScreen (described below);
- 2) Census tracts lacking overall scores in CalEnviroScreen due to data gaps, but receiving the highest 5% of CalEnviroScreen "Pollution Burden" composite scores;
- 3) Census tracts identified in 2017 as disadvantaged, regardless of their CalEnviroScreen scores; and,
- 4) Lands under the control of federally recognized Tribes.

CalEnviroScreen: CalEnviroScreen is a science-based mapping tool developed by OEHHA and CalEPA, to help identify California communities that are most affected by multiple sources of pollution, as well as communities that may be especially vulnerable to pollution's effects. Among other things, the state uses the tool to 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 disadvantaged communities.

CalEnviroScreen 5.0, released in July 2026, is the most current version of the tool. According to OEHHA, the updated version incorporates recent census tract and data updates, refined methodologies, and input from community-based organizations. In addition, CalEnviroScreen 5.0 adds two new indicators—diabetes prevalence and small air toxic sites—and, pursuant to requirements in AB 1059 (Garcia, Chapter 584, Statutes of 2015), brings in information to incorporate pollution concerns from the California-Mexico border region.

Farmworkers face multiple socioeconomic and environmental burdens: Surveys of California's farmworkers reveal that they face major challenges, including pesticide exposure, poverty, educational barriers, linguistic isolation, housing and food insecurity, difficult working conditions, and poor healthcare access. 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.

This bill: AB 1600 requires CalEPA to assess whether designating farmworker communities as disadvantaged communities would increase their access to GGRF investment opportunities, publicly post its findings, and consider these findings when identifying disadvantaged communities. In doing so, this bill aims to initiate a much needed, publicly transparent examination of the multiple burdens that farmworker communities face and their ability to access state resources.

According to the Author

"Farmworkers should be treated with dignity and respect reflective of the essential contribution they make to California's agricultural economy. Every day, they face the compounding burdens of extreme heat, pesticide exposure, substandard housing, and environmental degradation, conditions that are only worsening as climate change intensifies. However, some farmworker communities remain structurally excluded from climate investments that are designed to help communities like theirs.

For example, California's climate investment framework prioritizes disadvantaged communities (DACs) for investments from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF). Even though farmworkers face clear environmental and socioeconomic vulnerability, many rural and unincorporated farmworker communities fall outside the eligibility boundaries for DAC designation. AB 1600 resolves this gap by directing CalEPA and OEHHA to identify potential barriers that low-income communities face in accessing investment opportunities, evaluate if DAC designation would expand community funding, and develop a strategy to engage with farmworker communities throughout this process."

Arguments in Support

Writing on a prior version of AB 1600, La Cooperativa Campesina de California states:

"Every day, California's farmworkers face the compounding burdens of extreme heat, pesticide exposure, substandard housing, and environmental degradation—conditions that are only worsening as climate change intensifies. These are the workers who sustain California's over \$100 billion agricultural economy, yet they remain structurally excluded from the very climate programs designed to help communities like theirs... While CalEnviroScreen was built to capture urban pollution burdens, it was not designed to reflect the realities of farmworker life: agricultural labor concentration, rural pesticide exposure, substandard housing in unincorporated areas, and extreme heat vulnerability. As a result, many farmworker dense communities in counties such as Monterey, Napa, Sonoma, and Mendocino do not score high enough to qualify for the [GGRF] benefits they deserve. AB 1600 does not replace or dismantle CalEnviroScreen; instead, it corrects a structural gap by explicitly including farmworker communities in the statutory definition of [disadvantaged communities]."

Arguments in Opposition

None on file.

FISCAL COMMENTS

According to the Senate Appropriations Committee, writing on a prior version of AB 1600, enactment of this bill would likely result in cost pressures in the hundreds of thousands or low millions of dollars annually, so that OEHHA, the California Air Resources Board, and other state entities could incorporate farmworker communities into the disadvantaged community designation.

VOTES:**ASM ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY AND TOXIC MATERIALS: 5-1-1**

YES: Connolly, Bauer-Kahan, Lee, McKinnor, Papan

NO: Ellis

ABS, ABST OR NV: Castillo

ASM APPROPRIATIONS: 11-4-0

YES: Wicks, Aguiar-Curry, Calderon, Caloza, Fong, Mark González, Krell, Pacheco, Pellerin, Sharp-Collins, Solache

NO: Hoover, Dixon, Ta, Tangipa

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 60-10-10

YES: 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

NO: Davies, Dixon, Ellis, Hadwick, Hoover, Johnson, Patterson, Sanchez, Ta, Tangipa

ABS, ABST OR NV: Alanis, Castillo, Chen, DeMaio, Flora, Jeff Gonzalez, Lackey, Muratsuchi, Celeste Rodriguez, Wallis

UPDATED

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