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Climate Justice Leaders Concerned by Brown's Budget, Urge Investment in Underserved Communities

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SACRAMENTO – Climate justice advocates from the SB 535 Coalition expressed support today for some new investment ideas in Gov. Brown's proposed state budget but concern about other aspects of the proposal. The coalition – named for the 2012 law authored by Senator Kevin de León (D-Los Angeles) requiring that a percentage of Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund proceeds from the state's carbon auctions go to California's most disadvantaged communities – urged immediate action to direct unallocated carbon auction funds from 2015 to communities that have suffered disproportionately from pollution and redlining.

One of the most disturbing aspects of the governor's proposal is that takes at least \$1 billion raised from carbon auctions but never allocated and simply rolls it into the new budget, effectively reducing 2015-16 spending to curb pollution and expand clean energy, clean vehicles, urban tree-planting and other vital programs

"Our communities have already suffered with excessive levels of pollution for far too long," said Bill Magavern, Policy Director of the Coalition for Clean Air. "The governor and legislature should show a sense of urgency in sending climate dollars to meet critical needs in those communities."

The groups expressed support for the governor's proposal to enable funding for integrated local pollution-fighting projects in the most disadvantaged five percent of California's communities. But advocates criticized the governor's proposal to allocate \$100 million in GGRF money to repave roads rather than to projects that clean the air and help underserved communities, as specified under the law. The California Air Resources Board has concluded in research briefs that repaving roads leads to

increased carbon emissions; GGRF revenues, by contrast, are required by law to achieve “reductions of greenhouse gas emissions.”

“Revenues from the GGRF should go to transportation investments that help low-income communities and reduce greenhouse gas emissions,” said Chelsea Tu, staff attorney at Public Advocates, Inc. “That means investing in more bus service and lower fares, measures that encourage use of public transportation not driving,” said Tu.

“While there are positive aspects to this budget, parts of it take us in the wrong direction,” said Greenlining Institute Environmental Equity Director Alvaro Sanchez. “It’s time to move more aggressively to invest in disadvantaged communities, bringing clean air and good jobs to neighborhoods hit first and worst by pollution and climate change, and to strengthen the guarantee that those communities will truly benefit from our climate policies.”

"Both the urgency of addressing climate change and the needs of California’s low-income, immigrant voting populous require that meaningful investments are made today," said Parin Shah, senior strategist at the Asian Pacific Environmental Network. "The governor's budget needs to prioritize delivering more renewable energy, greater access to public transportation, as well as energy efficient apartments, especially in the neighborhoods that have endured fossil fuel pollution for decades."

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