

# California State Senate

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May 06, 2026

Yana Garcia, Secretary  
California Environmental Protection Agency  
1001 I Street, P.O. Box 2815  
Sacramento, CA 95812

## **Re: Request to Delay Finalization of CalEnviroScreen 5.0 and Address Exclusion of Environmental Justice Communities in the Bay Area**

We are writing to request the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA) delay finalizing the draft CalEnviroScreen (CES) 5.0 tool until improvements are made to include environmental justice communities across the Bay Area. While we appreciate OEHHA's ongoing efforts to improve CES, we are concerned that environmental justice communities in our region are not adequately represented by the tool. Their exclusion risks perpetuating existing environmental and economic disparity by limiting equitable access to state funding allocated to SB 535 communities.

The Draft CES 5.0 tool does not reflect local experience, environmental conditions, or community perspectives of the Bay region. Census tracts across the Bay Area have lost Disadvantaged Community (DAC) designation<sup>1</sup> between CES 4.0 and draft CES 5.0 despite persistent and acute experience of pollution and socioeconomic burdens. In many of these areas, census tracts include communities with stark wealth disparities within the same tract, resulting in volatile CES scores that are not a product of meaningful environmental or socioeconomic improvement. OEHHA must delay finalizing draft CES 5.0 and consider incorporating previous

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<sup>1</sup> From data from OEHHA, Draft CalEnviroScreen 5.0, per "CA Open Data Portal." Accessed March 6, 2026. The portion of Bay Area communities qualifying as DACs has decreased in the newest iteration of the tool (7.6% in CES 4.0 to 6.9% in CES 5.0).

designations into draft CES 5.0 to address this volatility and enable more effective, sustained programmatic targeting.

The CES tool and DAC designation have incredibly consequential implications to the delivery of program services and funding to frontline communities in the Bay Area. Moving forward, it is imperative that the public has access to and trusts the public engagement process that develops these tools. That includes providing increased transparency regarding the collection of data inputs, equitable access to an in-person public forum, translated materials, and interpretation and translation services. This will ensure that environmental justice communities across the state can participate and be accurately reflected in the process.

Without improving the draft CES 5.0 tool and engagement process, key communities in the Bay Area risk losing access to funding for affordable housing, clean energy, zero-emission transit, and other critical support.<sup>2</sup> This will perpetuate the historical disinvestment in communities that have had the most exposure to air pollution, toxic contaminants, and the impacts of climate change. Instead of proceeding with the draft in its current form, we urge OEHHA to consider changes that include environmental justice communities in the Bay Area.

Sincerely,



Josh Becker  
Chair, Bay Area Caucus



Cecilia Aguiar-Curry  
Assemblymember, 4th District



Patrick Ahrens  
Assemblymember, 26th District



Jesse Arreguin  
Senator, 7th District

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<sup>2</sup> A formal DAC designation is associated with a 104% increase in funding. Huynh, Benjamin Q., Elizabeth T. Chin, Allison Koenecke, et al. "Mitigating Allocative Tradeoffs and Harms in an Environmental Justice Data Tool." *Nature Machine Intelligence* 6, no. 2 (2024): 187–94. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s42256-024-00793-y>.

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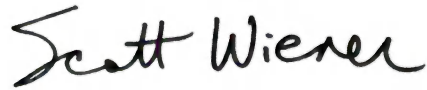
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