



March 8, 2013

Mary Nichols, Chair  
 California Air Resource Board  
 1001 I Street  
 Sacramento, CA 95814

**Subject: Public Health Recommendations for Investment of AB 32 Auction Proceeds**

Dear Chairwoman Nichols:

California’s public health and medical community including health organizations, health professionals and other health leaders have been steadfast supporters of state efforts to promote clean air, clean energy and improved public health through Assembly Bill 32 (AB 32), the California Global Warming Solutions Act. As California embarks on the process of allocating AB 32 Cap and Trade auction proceeds, we are writing to urge that these funds go to projects that provide the highest level of public health benefits and criteria pollution reductions while reducing emissions that contribute to climate change.

California is facing a public health crisis due to devastating chronic illness burdens facing millions of Californians, including asthma, emphysema, chronic bronchitis, heart disease and diabetes, as well as obesity. These high levels of chronic disease are exacerbated as over 90 percent of Californians live in areas with unhealthy air, largely caused by our dependence on dirty fossil fuels. Beyond the air pollution impacts, the built environment also adds to our health challenges. Communities designed without options for physical activity contribute to obesity-related illnesses, while a lack of sufficient green space or urban tree cover create urban heat islands that cause heat stress and more localized pollution exposures. The price tag of these chronic health problems adds up to billions in hospital visits, medications and premature deaths. These and other health concerns as well as increases in infectious diseases, allergies and other health problems, will only worsen as climate change impacts continue to grow.

As the state considers the investment of AB 32 Cap and Trade auction proceeds, a key focus must be on thoughtful investment of proceeds to reduce the health burdens of air pollution and climate change on all Californians, and particularly on the most disadvantaged communities, as required by Senate Bill 535 (de Leon, 2012). Therefore, we recommend that additional criteria be included in the CARB guidance

and decision making on allocation of cap and trade revenues to ensure that projects achieving reductions in greenhouse gas emissions also achieve the following:

1. **Maximize local and regional reductions in criteria air pollutants to support efforts to meet state and federal clean air standards; and**
2. **Improve community resilience to worsening climate conditions in the future through improved air quality and health, community design and transportation options**
3. **Advance health and equity in disadvantaged communities and areas most impacted by air pollution.**

Our recommendations for specific programs that achieve these goals include the following:

#### **Promote Healthy Air in Disadvantaged Communities**

Vulnerable populations including low-income communities, communities of color, communities near pollution hot spots and underserved communities in California face disproportionate health burdens due to localized exposures to harmful air pollutants and toxic air contaminants as well as climate change impacts. According to the American Lung Association's 2012 *State of the Air* report, over 5 million Californians in poverty are living in areas burdened with unhealthy air. Unhealthy air contributes to decreased life expectancy in these communities and to health inequities in respiratory and cardiovascular disease.

- Investments should focus on pollution reduction strategies including cleaning up existing facilities, reducing near-roadway pollutant exposures, improving energy efficiency and promoting the distribution of renewable energy sources.

#### **Support Zero and Near Zero Transportation and Fuels, Including Clean-up of Freight Sector**

Significant investments should be directed to zero- and near-zero emission transportation vehicles and fuels given that this sector is the leading source of carbon, smog and particulate pollution in California. Special focus is needed on cleaning up the goods movement sector, given the proximity of many disadvantaged communities to ports, rail yards and freight traffic. A rapid transition to the cleanest possible transportation sector will provide dramatic improvements in public health and ensure California makes progress toward federal clean air targets. AB 32 auction proceeds should support:

- Deployment of zero emission passenger vehicle technologies and infrastructure to reduce emissions from fossil-fueled vehicles.
- Investment in clean transit technologies to integrate with healthy community design (described below).
- Transition to zero- and near-zero emission freight movement to reduce toxic diesel emissions that greatly affect low-income communities and provide added benefit of black carbon reductions.

#### **Promote Healthy Communities, Active Transportation and Improved Transit**

Improvements in community land use and transportation planning as required by SB 375 (Steinberg, 2008) can provide a broad range of public health benefits over the next several decades. For example, increasing healthy, active transportation options such as walking, biking and transit will yield significant benefits in reduced chronic illness, obesity and improved air quality. Specific investments in this category that help to reduce pollution and improve health include:

- Infrastructure that improves active transportation opportunities, including safe bicycle and pedestrian access to allow residents to incorporate healthy physical activity into their daily routines in lieu of driving.
- Transit oriented development, including affordable housing and opportunities for transit alternatives (carpool, van pool, car sharing, etc.) to reduce emissions and avoid displacement of lower income residents to outlying, auto-dependent areas.
- Expand and extend public transit service to reduce emissions and support lower-income community mobility connections to healthcare, schools, employment, groceries and other daily needs.
- Urban planning tools that provide local decision-makers with specific air quality and health impact information, such as the Strategic Growth Council-funded Urban Footprint model and California Department of Public Health's Integrated Transport and Health Impacts Model (ITHIM) work.

### **Reduce Urban Heat Islands**

California must avoid and mitigate the "urban heat island" effect in urban areas that causes higher temperatures and heat stress, localized air pollution impacts and greater energy demand for cooling. Urban forestry solutions can sequester carbon dioxide, provides shade for heat-absorbing surfaces, and can provide critical buffers to roadway pollution. Projects should include:

- Urban greening/tree canopy projects to sequester carbon, absorb air pollutants and storm water and provide shade to reduce heat health effects and household utility and cooling demand and costs.
- Neighborhood parks to provide safe places to play, carbon sequestration benefits, and shade to reduce heat island effect on energy demand. Pedestrian-accessible parks also reduce vehicle trips to regional parks and promote daily physical activity for residents of all ages. Access to outdoor green space may additionally reduce stress and improve mental health.
- Cool roof and pavement projects to prevent heat absorption and cut utility costs for cooling.
- Focused investment in disadvantaged communities, particularly those identified as having low air conditioning access, can reduce greenhouse gas emissions, help to control utility costs, reduce heat stress and localized air pollution health impacts and provide much-needed green space and exercise opportunities.

### **Support Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency and Healthy Housing**

Investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy sources provide an opportunity to reduce dependence on fossil fuels while improving health and spurring technology and jobs in California. Particularly important for disadvantaged communities, investment in energy efficiency and weatherization programs can cut energy, heating and cooling costs but should also focus on cleaning up indoor air pollution.

- Investment in distributed renewable energy generation to displace fossil-fueled power, cut generation-related pollution and reduce infrastructure and transmission costs.
- Investment in energy efficiency and weatherization programs in disadvantaged communities, and in affordable, multi-family housing settings to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by reducing energy demand. Such projects should also reduce indoor air pollutants and other housing-related hazards that harm health. Indoor air pollution contributes to health inequities in respiratory disease including asthma.

We thank you for your consideration of these recommendations to reduce greenhouse gases, localized air pollution impacts, and improve health and ensure benefits to California's most disadvantaged communities. As public health professionals throughout the state, we see this as an opportunity to address California's marked health inequities while providing statewide benefits to health and well-being. Our organizations look forward to the ongoing dialogue around these important decisions. Please do not hesitate to contact us for further information.

Sincerely,

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