

August 14th, 2026

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



Re: Comments to Improve CalEPA's Preliminary 2026 Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) Designation

Dear Secretary Garcia,

We appreciate the opportunity to submit comments on California Environmental Protection Agency's (CalEPA's) preliminary 2026 Disadvantaged Communities (DAC) designation. As the director of the Tenderloin Housing Clinic's (a San Francisco non-profit) Organizing Department, I oversee the Central City SRO Collaborative (CCSROC) and La Voz Latina programs. The CCSROC works with single room occupancy tenants in residential hotels located in the Tenderloin and SOMA neighborhoods, which are some of the most vulnerable in terms of health and economically. At La Voz Latina, our work primarily focuses on families and seniors that need help with rental assistance, move-in assistance and cultural events for the community.

These communities are resilient with huge immigrant families, seniors and single adults who are often on fixed incomes. Many of them suffer from poor health related to respiratory problems that are partially caused to poor air quality conditions and they often reside in very old buildings that sometimes have mold and poor air quality and circulation inside their units and throughout their entire building.

We highly support CalEPA's inclusion of carryover tracts from CalEnviroScreen (CES) 4.0; however, there must be additional efforts to accurately capture the increased need and vulnerability in communities across California, which are confronting affordability and climate crises, paired with an unprecedented retraction of federal investments. Instead of arbitrary cut-offs based on tools that systematically fail to reflect realities on the ground, CalEPA must prioritize expanding eligibility to protect access so communities of need aren't overlooked.

CalEnviroScreen has consistently failed to accurately capture environmental justice communities, particularly with the unique conditions in the Bay Area. Since CES 5.0 has been finalized without meaningful changes to improve representation in the Bay Area, we turn to CalEPA to swiftly make this designation work accurately for all Californians—including those in San Francisco and the Bay Area. We urge CalEPA to interrogate and adopt solutions to broaden the designation, for example increasing to top 35%, adding a ½ buffer around top tracts, including top 25% of population-burdened tracts, and/or carrying over 3.0 tracts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Pratibha'.

Pratibha Tekkey, Community Organizing Director
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