



February 21, 2024

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
 Governor, State of California
 State Capitol, First Floor
 Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Mike McGuire
 Senator Pro Tem, State of California
 State Capitol, Suite 8610
 Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Robert Rivas
 Assemblymember Speaker, State of California
 State Capitol, Suite 8330
 Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Scott Weiner
 Chair, Senate Budget Committee,
 State of California
 State Capitol, Suite 8630
 Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Jesse Gabriel
 Chair, Assemblymember Budget Committee,
 State of California
 State Capitol, Suite 8230
 Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Josh Becker
 Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee #2
 State Capitol, Room 7250
 Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Steve Bennett
 Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee #3
 State Capitol, Room 4710
 Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Protect Climate Program Funds in FY 24-25 Budget

Dear State Leadership:

On behalf of the undersigned agencies and organizations, representing a diverse coalition of organizations working to advance climate action and resilience-building efforts across the state, we respectfully submit this letter in response to the Governor's January Proposed Budget and recommend protecting climate program funds to the fullest extent possible.

We applaud the leaders of the State for showcasing California as a frontrunner in the global fight against climate change. Your continuous dedication and efforts to mitigate the increasingly severe effects of climate change, along with your focus on directing investments to aid our state's most disadvantaged and at-risk communities, are commendable. Under your guidance, the State has implemented bold policies, tested successful initiatives, and developed inventive funding approaches, many of which are now being adopted elsewhere in our country and around the world. However, it is evident that achieving a balanced budget presents a significant challenge, particularly in the face of projected deficits. Despite this fiscal hurdle, it's imperative to recognize the indispensable role of climate program funds in attaining state goals, safeguarding communities, and fostering the necessary capacity and pipeline of projects to confront the climate crisis effectively.

Moreover, it's crucial to highlight the interconnectedness between climate funding and other key priorities of the Administration, such as housing. The increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, a result of climate change, pose significant risks including displacement, damage to housing infrastructure, and a rise in homelessness. Inadequate housing and urban development practices also contribute to carbon emissions and environmental degradation, exacerbating the climate crisis. Addressing these intertwined crises necessitates holistic approaches that prioritize sustainable and resilient housing solutions alongside climate resilience and adaptation efforts.

Reductions or delays in climate funding will not only hinder progress towards climate goals but also impede advancements in other critical areas. It is crucial to emphasize the importance of sustained investment in climate programs and highlight the potential costs of program cuts or delays, both in exacerbating climate impacts and hindering broader socioeconomic progress.

Protecting climate funds from further cuts will underscore your commitment to addressing pressing issues even during lean financial periods.

Maintaining current levels of climate funding is paramount in confronting the challenges posed by the climate crisis. Reducing funding for climate programs would have far-reaching repercussions for the state, particularly in terms of public health, community well-being, and economic prosperity. Despite the challenging budget decisions ahead, it is important to view climate investments as pivotal in addressing the current budget deficit. Leveraging these investments to promote multi-benefit solutions and support other state priorities, such as affordable housing and workforce development, presents an opportunity to maximize returns and capitalize on federal funding opportunities.

Communities throughout California have made significant progress in assessing climate risks and developing adaptation strategies, drawing on robust scientific insights and community engagement. It is imperative not to undermine the resources and collaborative efforts invested in developing these plans by allowing funding constraints to impede their implementation. Fully funding the state's climate budget package will not only facilitate the execution of these plans but also stimulate planning efforts in communities lacking comprehensive adaptation strategies. Moreover, it will enhance community and organizational capacity to access federal funds effectively, thereby strengthening California's resilience to climate impacts and ensuring a sustainable future for all.

Cutting or postponing climate funding will only escalate costs in the future. According to the [Global Commission on Adaptation](#), investments in improved resilience yield substantial returns, with benefit-cost ratios ranging from 2:1 to 10:1, or even higher in some cases. Additionally, numerous studies underscore the high returns on early action to enhance climate resilience, resulting from a combination of avoided losses, economic benefits, and social and environmental gains. As the world's fourth-largest economy, California stands to gain or lose significantly based on the level of state investments in climate resilience.

Urging support for climate bond measure: Key to mitigating budget cuts and enhancing resilience efforts.

Restore funding for Extreme Heat and Community Resilience Grant (EHCR) Program (70M).

While extreme heat stands as the most deadly and injurious impact of our changing climate, there is encouraging news. The state currently operates an effective program on Extreme Heat and Community Resilience (EHCR), funding excellent initiatives that are providing relief and saving lives. We strongly advocate for restoring funding to previous levels for this program, as well as for other heat mitigation programs at the Office of Planning and Research (OPR), California Natural Resource Agency (CNRA), and Strategic Growth Council (SGC).

Heat waves will ultimately affect all Californians—potentially causing electric outages in communities or sending loved ones to emergency rooms—as the warming aspect of global warming worsens progressively. However, there are Californians currently on the "heat front line" who are enduring these new temperature extremes. Among them are firefighters, warehouse workers, farmers and farmworkers, linemen, utility workers, the elderly on fixed incomes, and low-income families unable to afford air conditioning. While these Californians may be the first to feel the impact of extreme heat, they will certainly not be the last.

California holds a global leadership position in shaping climate resilience policy. What we develop in California transcends our borders. To maintain our state's global influence, we request continued support for California's pioneering work on extreme heat.

Specifically, we urge the restoration of \$40.1 million that was cut from the EHCR program, and the return of \$70 million (from Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund) to the general fund for use by OPR for the EHCR program. OPR's Adaptation Planning Grant Program, CNRA's Urban Greening, and SGC's Transformative Climate Communities and Resilience Center programs should receive similar consideration.

Restore funding for Regional Resilience Grant (RRG) Program (at least 25M).

OPR's Regional Climate Resilience Grant (RRG) Program, is a cornerstone of California's proactive stance against the mounting challenges presented by climate change. With its focus on enhancing community resilience, safeguarding natural ecosystems, promoting equity, and fostering collaboration, the RRG program is indispensable for ensuring the state's ability to weather the impacts of climate change effectively. Given California's vulnerability to wildfires, droughts, and other climate-related disasters, continued funding for the RRG program is essential to empower communities and ecosystems to adapt and thrive in the face of these challenges. Moreover, by prioritizing equity and social justice, the program addresses disparities exacerbated by climate change, ensuring that all Californians have access to the resources and support they need to build resilience. Sustaining funding for the RRG program is not just an investment in climate resilience—it's an investment in the future well-being and prosperity of California and its residents.

This important program is proposed to be reduced dramatically by \$50 million which would severely impede the opportunity to meet its purpose. We urge the restoration of at least \$25 million of the proposed reduction to maintain the effectiveness and reach of the effort.

Restore funding for Regional Climate Collaboratives (RCC) Grant Program (9.8M)

SGC, the agency overseeing Regional Climate Collaboratives (RCC), received applications for Round Two in December 2023, with the aim of awarding grants to communities in 2024. This funding had been previously allocated to the program in the Governor's 2022-23 Budget. 273 organizations diligently prepared and submitted 31 proposals to develop community-centered and community-driven projects and plans, aimed at enhancing social resilience and bolstering both individual and local resilience capacity. The massive number of partners shows how important even small grant programs are to under-resourced community based organizations (CBOs). Local government and CBO staff invested thousands of hours in crafting these applications. This funding is vital to SGC and its community partners, as it supports crucial capacity-building efforts for communities. We strongly urge the Governor to reinstate the \$9.8 million to RCC, enabling communities to access funds for capacity building, which they have already applied for and are relying on.

Thank you for your time in considering our comments. We greatly appreciate your ongoing leadership and commitment to creating an equitable, climate-resilient California, and remain committed to partnering with state agencies to achieve our shared goals. Please do not hesitate to contact Roger Dickinson, CivicWell's Policy Director, at rdickinson@civicwell.org if you have any questions or would like to discuss any of our comments further.

Respectfully,

Roger Dickinson, *Policy Director*
CivicWell

Shannon Parry, *Chief Sustainability Officer*
City of Santa Monica

Erin Coutts, *Executive Director*
**Los Angeles Regional Collaborative for
Climate Action and Sustainability (LARC)**

Darbi Berry, *Director*
San Diego Regional Climate Collaborative

Michael McCormick, *Director*
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James R Cameron, *Executive Director*
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