

February 3, 2017

The Honorable Eduardo Garcia, Chair
Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Assembly Bill 18 (Garcia) The California Clean Water, Climate, and Coastal Protection and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018 – SUPPORT IF AMENDED

Dear Chairman Garcia:

On behalf of California's urban forestry organizations charged with greening our Golden State through community trees, we applaud your introduction of Assembly Bill 18 -- The California Clean Water, Climate, and Coastal Protection and Outdoor Access for All Act of 2018.

As you may know, the Legislature has not passed a resources bond with significant funding for parks and urban green space in 15 years. AB 18 represents a tremendous opportunity to invest in social equity and help restore California's natural legacy.

One key funding element that has always been included in resource bonds is urban forestry, which does not yet appear in AB 18. Proposed policies highlighted in The 2017 Climate Change Scoping Plan Update and the California Forest Carbon Plan cite urban forestry as a critical component to "increase the use of green infrastructure in urban areas to enhance carbon sequestration potential in a manner that also results in co-benefits of energy efficiency of the built environment and transportation systems, reduction of the urban heat island effect, and improvement of water capture and storage, and supports direct, long-lasting benefits to disadvantaged communities and public health benefits." Combined, these documents include recommendations to increase total urban tree canopy statewide by 2030 by as much as 30%, and "protect the existing tree canopy through policies and programs targeting ongoing maintenance..."

California's Urban and Community Forestry Program (administered by CAL FIRE) has been the State's lead program for advancing tree-based urban green infrastructure for over 15 years. The technical expertise of CAL FIRE's six regional foresters coupled with their successful existing program has been a critical component in supporting hundreds of urban forestry projects that speak directly to improving public health, expanding recreational resources, reducing stormwater runoff, and mitigating climate change impacts in densely populated and underserved areas of the state.

For this reason, we are requesting an amend to AB 18 declaring "the sum of thirty million dollars (\$30,000,000) shall be available to the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection for grants pursuant to Chapter 2 (commencing with Section 4799.06) of Part 2.5 of Division 4." Ideally, this amendment should include language specifying that these grants shall complement existing urban forestry expenditures by covering areas not included for funding from the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, established pursuant to Section 16428.8 of the Government Code.

The U.S. Forest Service estimates that at least 40 million tree-planting sites are immediately available in California, which would add 20% more trees to our existing urban forests if all trees were planted. AB 18 could play an essential role in meeting that goal by providing necessary fiscal resources that would be leveraged by additional private and public funds, and a community volunteer base that is one of the best in the nation.

California has never passed a resources bond in the 21st Century that did not include a specific allocation for urban forestry. For this reason and those stated, we urge you to consider the proposed amendment to AB 18 as an appropriate addition when it moves through your Committee next week.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this important request.