

Contact: Jean-Paul Renaud, chief communications officer
818-623-4896
jprenaud@treepeople.org

TreePeople urges legislators to reinstate funding for essential equity-focused climate resiliency programs.

(LOS ANGELES) – The Fiscal Year 2023-2024 California Budget proposal released by Gov. Gavin Newsom this week forecasts an estimated \$22.5 billion deficit, resulting in proposed funding cuts to numerous programs across dozens of state departments and agencies. While the proposed budget recognizes the need to maintain certain investments that directly support our most disadvantaged communities, it also proposes deep cuts to equity-based climate resilience programs designed to uplift these same communities and protect our most vulnerable populations.

TreePeople recognizes the fiscal challenges California faces, and appreciates that the proposed budget retains all funding appropriated for school greening and California's Outdoor Equity Access Program. However, the proposed cuts outlined, along with many others, actually threaten public health equity.

"These proposed reductions represent a step backwards, and a disappointing disinvestment in public health equity," said TreePeople CEO Cindy Montañez. "Communities most impacted by climate change need consistent support from state leadership now more than ever."

Several proposed reductions and reversions threaten to dismantle critical progress on environmental justice issues and nature-based solutions, undercutting strides towards equitably safeguarding public health in the face of climate change. Among them are:

- Zeroing out investments for Urban Forestry and Urban Greening for this fiscal year. In addition to eliminating \$110 million in commitments to these programs for 2023, the budget also proposes to take back \$20 million for Urban Forestry that was allocated for 2022.
- Reducing \$65 million in FY 2022-23 and \$40 million in FY 2023-24 for Transformative Climate Communities – a unique program that empowers

communities most impacted by pollution to choose their own goals, strategies, and projects to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and local air pollution.

- Eliminating all funding (\$75 million) in FY 2022-23 and FY 2023-24 for the Extreme Heat and Community Resilience Program which helps communities prepare for the impacts of extreme heat.
- Eliminating all funding (\$75 million) for Local Parks in Fiscal Year 2022-2023.

Nature-based solutions, such as urban greening and urban forestry, are proven tools for fighting climate change and protecting our most vulnerable communities from extreme heat – the leading cause of weather-related deaths in the U.S. Highly urbanized areas are most vulnerable to the impacts of extreme heat, and people of color and low income communities disproportionately bear the burden of associated adverse health outcomes. A legacy of environmental injustice has left these communities more susceptible to extreme heat.

Urban Greening and Urban Forestry are proven, cost effective and long term investments that address these injustices. However, they require sustained commitment over time to make a substantial impact. Removing funding for these critical programs and others now, due to financial challenges, adversely impacts vulnerable communities when they are most in need of additional support and resources.

“Instead of pulling back during hard times, we need to sustain a deep commitment to proven solutions to our ever changing climate, especially in areas like Urban Forestry and Urban Greening.” Montañez added. “I strongly urge legislators to reinstate full support for these essential climate resilience programs.”

About TreePeople

TreePeople unites the power of trees, people, and nature-based solutions to grow a more climate-ready Southern California. The organization inspires, engages and supports people to take personal responsibility for the urban environment, facilitates collaboration among government agencies, and promotes leadership in grassroots volunteers, students and communities. In this way, TreePeople seeks to build a powerful and diverse coalition to grow a greener, healthier and more water-secure Southern California for present and future generations. For more information, visit treepeople.org.

