

Senate Bill 398

Green Assistance Program

Senator Connie M. Leyva (D – Chino)

SUMMARY

SB 398 creates the Green Assistance Program (GAP) which ensures that disadvantaged communities and business in California have equal access to greenhouse gas reduction funds. Specifically, the program will provide technical assistance to small businesses, small non-profits and disadvantaged communities to access funding for energy efficiency upgrades or projects that lessen the negative health impacts of poor air quality.

BACKGROUND

In order to help achieve the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, the Air Resources Board (ARB) established the cap-and-trade program. The ARB conducts quarterly auctions where it sells emission allowances. For the next fiscal year alone, the ARB expects \$2.2 billion from auction revenues.

This revenue is deposited into the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund and then distributed to state agencies to fund programs that reduce the impact of poor air quality. Cities, businesses and a variety of local agencies and districts can then apply for funding to help comply with air quality goals.

PROBLEM

California is home to some of the worst air quality in the nation, specifically areas such as the Inland Empire which is the primary route for transporting goods from the Ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles to the rest of the United States.

Many of our state's most polluted areas are small disadvantaged communities – areas with higher rates of poverty and higher incidences of asthma and cancer. These smaller communities often do not have the technical expertise or marketing capabilities to develop and pursue grant and financing options. This situation oftentimes leaves our most vulnerable communities at a financial disadvantage.

Small businesses and small non-profits are often left to the same fate. Local businesses are an important backbone of our communities, but many are unaware of the myriad of programs at various state agencies that provide funding for energy efficiency upgrades. Some of these upgrades could ease the financial cost of doing business.

Currently, there is no single place for small communities and businesses to turn to for assistance in accessing funds for mitigating the impacts of poor air quality.

SOLUTION

SB 398 ensures that disadvantaged communities, small non-profits and businesses in California have an equal opportunity meet our state greenhouse gas emission reduction goals.

Housed at the California Environmental Protection Agency, the GAP will provide small communities and businesses with information on all the funding available and assistance on how to apply for funding at the various agencies. As more funding becomes available, the state must ensure that every city and business has the same ability to participate in creating healthier neighborhoods.

STATUS

Introduced on February 25, 2015

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