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California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA) Demands Equitable Participation and Transparency in Department of Energy's Hydrogen Infrastructure Funding

California is going to receive billions of dollars in hydrogen funding, but communities of color from low-income backgrounds have been completely shut out of shaping California's energy future

Sacramento, Calif – The California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA), representing communities of color from low-income backgrounds across California, vehemently opposes California's current approach to obtain hydrogen infrastructure funding, managed by [ARCHES](#). Communities of color and low-income families are disproportionately affected by the climate crisis and are on the frontlines of environmental injustices. In response to the Department of Energy's recent funding announcement, CEJA is demanding immediate changes to ensure that these communities have a meaningful voice in decisions that directly impact their lives.

“The billions of dollars of state and federal funding earmarked for hydrogen have the potential to change the entire landscape of electricity production in America — a landscape that has exemplified environmental racism for many lifetimes. As we're seeing in ARCHES, without leadership from frontline communities, this funding will almost certainly perpetuate the injustices we need to eradicate,” **says Ari Eisenstadt, CEJA's Energy Equity Manager.**

[In a letter](#), CEJA demands that the Department of Energy implements the following before releasing funding to ARCHES:

- **Eliminate the NDA Requirement:** CEJA urges the Department of Energy to eliminate the requirement for groups to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) in order to participate in substantive proposal discussions and gain access to project details. Transparency is crucial for informed decision-making and community trust.
- **Real Community Engagement:** CEJA emphasizes the importance of real, meaningful community engagement. The Department of Energy must actively involve environmental justice advocates and community members in discussions, valuing their insights and concerns.
- **Amend Proposed Governance Structure:** CEJA calls for amendments to the proposed governance structure (board) of the initiative, including:

- Inclusion of two or more Environmental Justice/Community-Based Organization (EJ/CBO) seats.
- Representation of one or more Public Health experts/representatives.
- Geographic diversity representation, ensuring urban and rural communities are both included.
- Consolidation of the three hydrogen industry sectors into one seat.
- Rotation of the California state seat among different agencies (e.g., CEC, CPUC) to broaden perspectives.
- **Appropriate Compensation:** CEJA demands appropriate compensation for advisory group members and EJ/CBO board members, recognizing the expertise and time commitment these roles require.

“Hydrogen has been hailed as the climate solution of the future, but unfortunately, in large part, it is not. Generating hydrogen is extremely inefficient and dangerous, and without genuine and deliberate incorporation of environmental justice communities and principles this investment by the Department of Energy will harm already vulnerable groups and the overall fight against climate change,” **says Kayla Karimi, Staff Attorney at the Center for Race, Poverty and the Environment.**

CEJA and its members believe that these changes are not just necessary, but essential for ensuring a just transition away from fossil fuels and towards a clean energy future. Communities of color and families from low-income backgrounds must be active participants in shaping policies and initiatives that impact their well-being. The Department of Energy must recognize their experiences and expertise as valuable assets in creating a more sustainable and equitable future.

“ARCHES' community engagement efforts have been disastrous, with meetings that provide no substantive updates and fail to follow best practices for inclusivity. ARCHES' insistence on non-disclosure agreements has stifled community participation, hindering meaningful engagement and deepening our concerns with transparency, public feedback, and representation. We are deeply disappointed the DOE has chosen to move forward with the ARCHES project despite strong opposition from environmental justice communities and organizations,” **says Alex Jasset, Director of Energy Justice, Physicians for Social Responsibility- Los Angeles.**

Members and partners of the California Environmental Justice Alliance have released a collection of [shared positions](#) on the future of hydrogen in California. Developed across a series of intensive learning sessions and workshops, these positions are critical to creating an equitable clean energy future for all Californians. Broadly, these positions break down into three categories:

1. **We only accept green hydrogen projects and use that does not keep fossil fuel infrastructure online and meets the outlined equity principles.**
2. **We oppose all forms of dirty hydrogen production.**
3. **We demand community consent and involvement in the development of any hydrogen project.**

“Production, delivery, storage, and end uses of hydrogen can present more harm to working class communities of color, while potentially setting us on a path to undermine California climate targets,” **said Bahram Fazeli, Director of Research and Policy for Communities for a Better Environment.** “Hydrogen infrastructure discussions and decisions must create meaningful community engagement opportunities, based on rigorous analyses that take into account cumulative health impacts on frontline environmental justice communities across our state. Our ***Equity Principles for Hydrogen*** can guide California throughout this process.”

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About the California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA)

The California Environmental Justice Alliance (CEJA) is a coalition of grassroots, environmental justice organizations working to achieve environmental justice and healthy, sustainable communities for all Californians. CEJA advocates for policies and programs that address the environmental and economic inequities experienced by low-income communities and communities of color in California.