

SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
Senator Thomas Umberg, Chair
2025-2026 Regular Session

AB 1584 (Jackson)
Version: June 9, 2026
Hearing Date: June 30, 2026
Fiscal: Yes
Urgency: No
ME

SUBJECT

State Air Resources Board: Office of Civil Rights

DIGEST

This bill establishes an Office of Civil Rights within the State Air Resources Board (CARB).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The author brings this bill to establish an Office of Civil Rights within CARB in an effort to ensure that the people that are most harmed by pollution are able to meaningfully participate in informing the decisionmaking of CARB. This Office within CARB would be responsible for providing training on civil rights obligations to CARB staff, grantees, contractors, and subrecipients; developing a civil rights evaluation tool to assist recipients in understanding and being able to meet their civil rights requirements; and ensuring language access and culturally appropriate outreach in all public engagement processes. CARB would also be required to post on its website an annual summary that includes a summary of civil rights complaints received by the Office; a description of compliance and enforcement efforts by the Office relating to civil rights; and an overview of public outreach and engagement activities carried out by the Office.

The bill is author sponsored and supported by the California Immigrant Policy Center. No timely opposition was received by the Committee. This bill was approved by the Senate Environmental Quality Committee with a vote of 5 to 2. If the bill passes this Committee, it will next be referred to the Senate Appropriations Committee.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE LAW

Existing law:

- 1) Establishes the California Air Resources Board (CARB) and tasks CARB with controlling emissions from motor vehicles and to coordinate, encourage, and review the efforts of all levels of government as they affect air quality. (Health & Saf. Code § 39500.)
- 2) Requires CARB to establish standards, rules, and regulations that are consistent with the state's goal of providing a decent home and suitable living environment for every Californian. (Health & Saf. Code § 39601.)
- 3) Establishes the Department of Human Resources to oversee the state's civil service system and to ensure that all applicants and employees in state service are treated in an equitable manner without regard to political affiliation, race, color, sex, religious creed, national origin, ancestry, marital status, age, sexual orientation, disability, political or religious opinions or nonjob-related factors. (Gov. Code § 18500.)

This bill:

- 1) Establishes an Office of Civil Rights (Office) within the CARB.
- 2) Specifies that the responsibilities of the Office include, but are not limited to, all of the following: providing training on civil rights obligations to CARB staff, grantees, contractors, and subrecipients; developing a civil rights evaluation tool to assist recipients in understanding and being able to meet their civil rights requirements; and ensuring language access and culturally appropriate outreach in all public engagement processes, as specified.
- 3) Requires CARB to post on its website an annual summary that includes, but is not limited to, the following information regarding the Office: a summary of civil rights complaints received by the Office; a description of compliance and enforcement efforts by the Office relating to civil rights; and an overview of public outreach and engagement activities carried out by the Office.
- 4) Provides that the implementation of the provisions of this bill is contingent upon appropriation by the Legislature in the Budget Act or another act.

COMMENTS

1. Stated need for the bill

According to the author:

Black and Latino Californians bear a disproportionate burden of air pollution exposure, the result of decades of inequitable land use policies, discriminatory zoning, and the systematic placement of freeways, industrial facilities, and waste sites near communities of color. Meaningful representation is not a courtesy; it is a democratic obligation. CARB must reflect the diversity of the state it serves, through the appointment of Board members and staff with deep roots in frontline communities, outreach conducted in multiple languages, and engagement embedded in trusted local institutions. The people most harmed by pollution have the clearest stake in the solutions, and until their voices carry real weight within the agency, California's environmental policies will continue to fall short of the equity they promise.

2. Creates and Office of Civil Rights in CARB

The author's office provided the Committee with information explaining that, "Black, Latino, Asian American and low-income communities are exposed to substantially more air pollution than other demographic groups in California." As explained in a health article provided by the Author's office¹:

[. . .] Air pollution, urbanization, redlining and industrialization all intersect with health equity in a way that harms minority and low-income communities, says Olawale Amubieya, MD, pulmonologist and junior faculty in the Division of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine at UCLA Health.

"Policies of the past cut out low-income, minority and urban communities from suburban communities where the traffic and smog are less dense. [These policies] relegated them into areas that are close to industrial plants, which produce more air pollution," he says. "It really does put these at-risk communities at even higher risk because of the health effects."

Included in high-risk category are low-income communities with large percentages of racial minorities, people experiencing homelessness, pregnant people, developing children, elderly adults and people with disabilities and chronic conditions.

¹ *When air pollution becomes a health equity issue: Poor air quality colliding with existing health inequities exacerbates disease*, UCLA Health (Nov. 1, 2021) Jocelyn Apodaca Schlossberg, available at <https://www.uclahealth.org/news/article/air-pollution-health-equity-los-angeles>

Neighborhoods in the San Francisco Bay area with higher percentages of people of color face double the rate of pollution-related childhood asthma compared to predominantly white neighborhoods, according to research from March 2021.

Additionally, Black, Latino, Asian American and low-income communities are exposed to substantially more air pollution than other demographic groups in California, a 2019 study shows. People living in dense urban areas like Los Angeles County had higher exposure to traffic pollution compared to the state average.

Dr. Amubieya says when poor air quality collides with the health inequities that already exist, diseases are exacerbated and health issues arise.

CARB is tasked with controlling emissions from motor vehicles and coordinating, encouraging, and reviewing the efforts of all levels of government as they affect air quality.

As reported by Politico in 2020, “Black employees of the California Air Resources Board have raised concerns about a racist work environment and are calling for more representation at the state’s main air and climate agency.”² Additionally, as explained in the Senate Environmental Quality Committee analysis for this bill³:

In 2020, Black employees at CARB submitted a letter to agency leadership outlining systematic bias within the agency. The letter noted that the staff of the agency were disproportionately white, that white staff regularly discounted the opinion of better qualified Black staffers, and that the agency did not actively seek to recruit a diverse workforce.

[. . .]

In response to the allegations in the letter, CARB established the Racial Equity Inventory’s Community Partner Workgroup and has adopted a “vision for change” to improve the agency’s internal policies and programs to better support a diverse workforce. The author notes that improving diversity at CARB is especially important given that one of the agency’s core missions is to improve air quality and cut down on pollution in California’s diverse frontline communities.

Drilling down on equity within CARB’s efforts to achieve California’s climate goals specifically, as early as AB 32 in 2006 (Nunez, Chapter 488, Statutes of

² Black employees call out systemic racism at California Air Resources Board, Politico, by Debra Kahn (Oct. 21, 2020), available at <https://www.politico.com/states/california/story/2020/10/21/black-employees-call-out-systemic-racism-at-california-air-resources-board-1328910>.

³ Citations omitted.

2006) called for an Environmental Justice Advisory Committee (EJAC). Although the CARB EJAC has provided significant (and often critical) feedback and direction on CARB on proposed actions, members have often complained that such feedback was not adequately considered or valued. This recently culminated in the resignation of EJAC co-chair Dr. Catherine Garoupa in November of last year. In her resignation, Dr. Garoupa cited “growing hostility toward EJAC that undermines its integrity” and “the increasing bias of the agency toward regulated industries and dismissal of the best available science, at the expense of low income communities and communities of color.”

The author brings this bill to establish an Office of Civil Rights within CARB in an effort to ensure that the people that are most harmed by pollution are able to meaningfully participate in informing the decision-making of CARB so that there are meaningful improvements to most impacted communities. This Office would be responsible for providing training on civil rights obligations to CARB staff, grantees, contractors, and subrecipients; developing a civil rights evaluation tool to assist recipients in understanding and being able to meet their civil rights requirements; and ensuring language access and culturally appropriate outreach in all public engagement processes. CARB would also be required to post on its website an annual summary that includes a summary of civil rights complaints received by the Office; a description of compliance and enforcement efforts by the Office relating to civil rights; and an overview of public outreach and engagement activities carried out by the Office.

The California Immigrant Policy Center explains the following in support of the bill:

Frontline communities across California, predominantly communities of color, low-income residents, and non-English-speaking households, continue to bear a disproportionate burden of air pollution and its devastating health consequences, including asthma, cardiovascular disease, and premature death. These same communities are now at heightened risk as federal rollbacks eliminate the enforcement mechanisms they have long depended on. By embedding a dedicated Office of Civil Rights within CARB, AB 1584 ensures that California's own environmental programs, grants, and contracts are held to the civil rights standards the federal government is abandoning.

Additionally, language access is foundational to equitable public engagement. AB 1584's requirements for translation and interpretation services, bilingual staffing, and multilingual public materials will ensure that the communities most affected by air quality decisions have a genuine seat at the table, not just a technical opportunity to participate. This is both a legal obligation and a matter of basic fairness.

We appreciate that AB 1584 builds in structures for ongoing learning and improvement through annual public summaries of civil rights activities and

coordinated efforts across CARB, local air districts, and CalEPA. These provisions signal a long-term commitment to getting this right, and they give community partners like our organizations a meaningful way to stay engaged and support CARB's work over time. For these reasons, we strongly support AB 1584.

SUPPORT

California Immigrant Policy Center

OPPOSITION

None received

RELATED LEGISLATION

Pending Legislation: None known.

Prior Legislation: None known.

PRIOR VOTES:

Senate Environmental Quality Committee (Ayes 5, Noes 2)

Assembly Floor (Ayes 57, Noes 18)

Assembly Appropriations Committee (Ayes 11, Noes 4)

Assembly Judiciary Committee (Ayes 9, Noes 3)
