



February 1, 2024

RE: Front and Centered Priorities for the 2024 Supplemental Budget

To Members of the Washington State Legislature,


The Front and Centered Coalition, composed of diverse communities of color across the state, has been instrumental in advocating for policies that prioritize the involvement of frontline communities in developing environmental justice solutions. The coalition's community engagement and design of an equitable investment framework were codified in the Healthy Environment for All Act (HEAL Act) and Climate Commitment Act (CCA) requiring that a minimum of 35 percent of climate and environmental funding has specified direct and meaningful benefits to vulnerable populations in Overburdened Communities.

For the 2024 Supplemental Budget, the Front and Centered Coalition recommends new significant investments that directly respond to needs identified by vulnerable populations and overburdened communities, including:

- 1) **Community Climate Land Acquisition Fund** to support the acquisition of community-controlled land and property improvements for climate resilience and mitigation for the benefit of vulnerable populations in overburdened communities. Eligible projects include:
 - a) acquisition or preservation of land in overburdened communities by those that can demonstrate permanent stewardship and control by members of the same communities;
 - b) improvement of land or property already stewarded or controlled by vulnerable populations in overburdened communities;
 - c) capacity building, technical assistance, workforce development, and community engagement to support predevelopment and governance structures with majority decision-making by members of vulnerable populations living on or working the land;
 - d) acquisition of climate-smart technologies for community-led green economic development; and
 - e) reparations for members of the black community who have been displaced.

- 2) Pilot a statewide network of **Community Assemblies** to empower community members to gather and identify community needs and solutions to environmental and climate justice concerns. Funding may be used for participant compensation,

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community organizing and engagement, capacity building and technical assistance, removing barriers to participation, and staffing. Assemblies will meet to discuss topics specific to their regions, identities, and experiences and develop recommendations for sustainable investments to be implemented by the department. The assemblies must be held in and convene members of overburdened communities.

- 3) Clean Energy Community Decarbonization** to administer non-competitive grants to fund the planning, design, and implementation of clean energy technologies and projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions in vulnerable, overburdened, and tribal communities. Projects providing direct and meaningful benefits to vulnerable populations in overburdened communities must be given priority. Eligible projects include community climate land acquisition, climate smart community farms and forests, community resilience hubs, energy efficient affordable housing, cultural preservation from climate-related displacement, green jobs related business, home weatherization, shared mobility services and vehicles, community microgrids, and community solar projects.
- 4) Environmental Violations Reporting Tools Study** to develop recommendations for a statewide, cross-jurisdictional approach to addressing environmental health hazard reporting and resolution for overburdened communities and vulnerable populations. A third-party contractor will produce a report with analysis of: (i) improvements to the collection and sharing of environmental health hazard reports across jurisdictions; (ii) needs of vulnerable populations and overburdened communities around reporting and resolution; (iii) feasibility of a universal intake form for reporting; (iv) improvements to multilingual services, outreach, community engagement, program administration, coordination and reporting; and (v) estimated costs to implement recommendations.

Below is a summary of the new significant investments outlined above. Please see the attached table for a full list of our recommended new investments, as well as adjustments to investments made in the 2023-2025 budgets.

Budget Item	Agency	Amount
Community Climate Land Acquisition Fund	Commerce	\$300,000,000
Community Assemblies	Social and Health Services	\$1,500,000
Clean Energy Community Decarbonization	Commerce	\$100,000,000
Environmental violations reporting tools study	Health	\$600,000

Additionally, the legislature must clearly and explicitly direct each line item dedicated to benefiting overburdened communities. The CCA and the HEAL Act require that a minimum of 35% of eligible funds benefit overburdened communities. It is therefore a legislative duty to provide clear direction to achieve such commitments. The legislature should explicitly specify in each qualifying proviso the amount required to benefit vulnerable populations in overburdened communities by replacing the existing language of “funds must prioritize providing benefits to overburdened communities” with “at least 35% of funds must benefit vulnerable populations and overburdened communities” or establish “a goal of allocating 35% of funds towards the benefit of vulnerable populations in overburdened communities”. Please see the attached Equity Accountability Improvements table for a detailed list of our recommended changes.

Sincerely,

Guillermo Rogel,

Legislative and Government Relations Advocate

TABLES

New and Adjusted Investments

Budget Item	Recommended Budget Change	2023-2025 CCA Allocation	2024 Supplemental Budget Request	Amount to OBC with Budget Revision	Current Estimate of amount to OBC
Community Climate Land Acquisition Fund	\$300,000,000 for the land purchase and preservation in Overburdened Communities for community use.	\$0	\$300,000,000	\$300,000,000	NA
Community Co-Governance Framework Pilot (Community Assemblies)	Pilot a statewide network of community assemblies centering historically Overburdened Communities and involving vulnerable populations at the front end of state government policy, program, and funding decision-making processes.	\$0	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	NA
Participatory Budgeting Projects	Fund at least \$100,000,000 to prevent the depletion of the fund, considering the fund must support five communities and may include capital projects.	\$38,600,000	\$100,000,000	\$100,000,000	\$32,600,000
Workplace Health and Safety Program	Increase funding to \$20,000,0000	\$10,000,000	\$20,000,000	\$20,000,000	\$10,000,000
Environmental Violations Reporting Tools Study	Fund \$600,000 for a study of the multiple agency environmental violations reporting tools to improve reporting and resolution across the state	\$0	\$600,000	\$0	NA

Statewide Energy Assistance Program	Funds are needed for the implementation of the plan to reduce the energy burden and provide access to energy assistance.	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$0	\$0
Frequent Accessible Transit	Provide funding for the Washington State Department of Transportation to conduct the recommended studies outlined in the 2023 Frequent Transit Service Study .	\$0	\$900,000	\$0	\$0
Clean Energy Community Decarbonization	\$100,000,000 for planning, design, and implementation of clean energy technologies in vulnerable, overburdened, and tribal communities.	\$0	\$100,000,000	\$35,000,000	\$0

Equity Accountability Improvements

Budget Item	Recommended Budget Change	2023-2025 CCA Allocation	Amount to OBC with Budget Revision	Current Estimate of amount to OBC
2023-25 Energy Retrofits and Solar Power for Public Buildings	Program intended to serve OBC, however, did not explicitly allocate amount in the budget. Amend to explicitly benefit OBC with at least 40% of the funding.	\$50,000,000	\$20,000,000	\$0
2023-25 Weatherization Plus Health	Program intended to serve OBC, however, did not explicitly allocate amount in the budget. Amend to explicitly benefit OBC with 100% of funding.	\$35,000,000	\$35,000,000	\$0

Bus and Bus Facility Grant Program	Program intended to serve OBC, however, did not explicitly allocate amount in the budget. Amend to explicitly benefit OBC with at least 80% of the funding.	\$38,000,000	\$30,400,000	\$0
Home Electrification and Appliance Rebates Program (HEAR)	Change "focus" or prioritization given to VP/OBC to project "must benefit".	\$80,000,000	\$80,000,000	\$26,250,000
Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Program	Program intended to serve OBC, however, did not explicitly allocate amount in the budget. Amend to explicitly benefit OBC with at least 40% of the funding.	\$76,748,000	\$50,882,000	\$26,861,800
Sandy Williams Connecting Communities Pilot	Program is intended to serve OBC, however, did not explicitly allocated amount in the budget. Amend to explicitly benefit OBC 100%	\$25,000,000	\$25,000,000	\$8,750,000
Urban Tree Canopy	Program intended to serve OBC, however, did not explicitly allocate amount in the budget. Amend to explicitly benefit OBC with at least 50% of the funding.	\$5,991,000	\$2,996,000	\$0