



Media Statement: Advocating for Environmental Justice in the State Budget

Front and Centered Responds to Gov. Inslee's Proposed 2024 Supplemental Budget

*December 13, 2023 – Washington Governor Jay Inslee released his Proposed 2024 Supplemental Budget today which includes policies and programs aimed at confronting the climate crisis and supporting environmental justice. The following is a statement in response by **Guillermo Rogel Jr.**, **Legislative and Government Relations Advocate** with Front and Centered.*

“We are encouraged to see some advances on environmental justice priorities included in Governor Inslee’s proposed budget — at the same time these advances raise further questions for our frontline community coalition.

“For example, funds being allocated toward community-led projects are promising, and we need to see that the details of such programs actually reflect community needs and priorities, including funds for community stewardship of the land and property for climate resilience. And while a one-time bill for energy assistance payments that will provide funds to the tune of \$200 million is much needed relief for low-income families, **we need permanent, consistent energy assistance that ensures no one is paying a disproportionate share of their income on energy bills, no matter their utility.**

“We continue to look to the legislature to build on the Governor’s proposal and fully fund programs like Community Assemblies and to put meaningful investments behind frequent and accessible transit. We also welcome improved clarity on investments made to overburdened communities, and we intend to review the budget in depth to ensure that it includes specific proviso language that prioritizes ‘overburdened communities.’

“The Front and Centered coalition remains concerned about the linkage of carbon markets as requested by the Department of Ecology. [Frontline communities know that linking our carbon markets to programs in California and Canada will reduce accountability to communities in Washington State.](#) A similar position has been taken by the Governor’s own appointed [Environmental Justice Council](#). **Ultimately, we need to focus on changes that address the**

climate crisis here in Washington State, specifically changes that address the harm and health disparities that continued pollution inflicts on our frontline communities.

“These communities have historically borne the worst effects of pollution due to redlining and institutional racism and shouldn’t continue to bear the ongoing harm being inflicted on their health, well-being, and even life expectancy today. To directly address these disparities, this session we are proposing the [Cumulative Risk Burden \(CURB\) Pollution Act](#). **The CURB Act will elevate community participation in the permit evaluations process and require the Department of Ecology to deny new permit applications that add cumulative pollution effects and work with applicants seeking permit renewals that add cumulative pollution effects, with the goal to reduce pollution over time.**

“Front and Centered continues work on new strategies to ensure that CCA auction-generated revenue benefits frontline communities as promised. [Our analysis shows](#) that in the budget passed in the 2023 legislative session, less than seven percent of expected revenue from the CCA program was explicitly appropriated to benefit overburdened communities, which falls far short of the 35% minimum and 40% goal outlined in law. **Our analysis was the only one of its kind, proving that it takes frontline community leadership to advance accountability. During this budgeting session, the legislature should fulfill their requirements under the CCA and the Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) Act by explicitly directing each line item that is dedicated to benefit frontline communities.**

“A Just Transition requires more than what the CCA can provide to communities of color, Indigenous peoples, and others on the frontlines of the climate crisis. During the 2024 session, [our statewide coalition is asking the legislature](#) to put the focus back on frontline communities.”

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