



March 24, 2024

Honorable Isaac Bryan, Chair
Honorable Members
Assembly Committee on Natural Resources
1020 N Street, Room 164
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: ACA-16: the California Green Amendment.

Dear Assemblymember Isaac Bryan and Members of the Committee,

Green Amendments For The Generations and the Climate Equity Policy Center are pleased to be cosponsors supporting ACA-16 (Bryan), a constitutional Green Amendment that recognizes and protects the right of Californians to clean air, water, and a healthy environment. ‘Green Amendments’ like ACA-16 are a special kind of environmental rights amendment that give environmental rights constitutional standing on par with other human, civil and political rights we hold dear.

The right to clean water and air and a healthy environment, is an inalienable human right that belongs to all the people of California. To ensure that this inherent, inalienable, indefeasible human right is given highest legal recognition and protection, it is important that it is recognized —as ACA-16 does—alongside other Article 1 fundamental rights such as the right to “freely speak,” the right to be free from “unreasonable searches and seizures,” and the right to “due process of law” and a “speedy” public trial.

Having a California Green Amendment will help ensure that existing environmental laws and regulations are implemented to their full potential; provide a basis for advancing needed protections and to secure protective government action when a gap in the law is identified (such as the case with PFAS contamination) or when laws as written and applied fail to ensure essential environmental protections; and strengthen the ability of communities to advocate for and secure essential environmental rights protections when concerns for environmental protection or environmental justice arise that are not being fully, fairly or equitably protected or addressed.

As currently drafted, ACA-16 seeks to advance essential environmental rights protection. But there are modifications that could offer greater clarity, strength, and enforceability. It would be beneficial for the committee to consider explicitly (i) recognizing generational protections (i.e. that environmental rights and natural resources must be protected for both present and future generations); (ii) recognizing the right to “healthy biodiversity” and a “safe climate” to ensure there is no doubt that these essential

elements are part of the protected environmental rights of the state; (iii) a clear mandate that protects environmental rights equitably for all Californians regardless of race, ethnicity or wealth; and (iv) making clear that the provision is self-executing and enforceable by all the people of California.

Currently only 3 states have Green Amendment protections – Pennsylvania, Montana, and New York (with New York’s most recently passed by over 70% of voters in 2021). Passage of the California Green Amendment will demonstrate, yet again, California’s leadership on human rights, environmental justice, environmental protections, and climate action.

We strongly support the California Green Amendment.

With respect,



Maya K. van Rossum
Founder
Green Amendments For The Generations



Sara Zimmerman
Founder
Climate Equity Policy Center