

May 9, 2025

Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation

1400 10th Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: Ensuring Equitable Access to Prop 4 Funds for Vulnerable Rural Communities**

Dear Ms.Doddanari,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft Vulnerable Communities Map being developed by the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation.

As organizations working closely with rural and climate-vulnerable communities on the south coast of San Mateo County, we are concerned that the current draft map does not accurately reflect conditions. The map indicates low to medium social vulnerability in this area, despite the well-documented presence of farmworker and low-income communities who face disproportionate risks from climate-related impacts.

This is particularly significant because Proposition 4—the Safe Drinking Water, Wildfire Prevention, Drought Preparedness, and Clean Air Bond Act of 2024—states that at least 40 percent of bond money must be used for activities that directly benefit communities that have lower incomes or are more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. If vulnerable communities like ours are not accurately identified, they may be excluded from funding specifically intended to protect and support them.

We believe this disconnect may be due to several key issues:

- **Averaging effects mask disparity:** Based on the map's outcomes, it appears that local extremes in income may be averaged in a way that hides social vulnerability. In the community of Pescadero, for example, low-income farmworker families live in the same census tract as extremely wealthy Silicon Valley tech executives, many of whom have a second home in our region. This level of disparity can make it appear that the community is better resourced than it truly is for those most impacted by climate risk.
- **Census undercounts:** Farmworkers, lower-income residents, and Spanish-speaking immigrant community members—especially those living in employer or informal housing—are significantly underrepresented in data sources.
- **Access barriers:** It is well documented that this community lacks access to essential services—such as healthcare, transportation, food, and emergency response—which increases vulnerability to climate-related hazards. The closest health clinic to Pescadero, aside from a weekly pop-up clinic, is 18 miles away—and even farther (up to 20 miles) for those living near the county line. There is no public transportation connecting Pescadero to any other community. More information can be found in the report, [\*San Mateo County's Forgotten South Coast Residents\*](#).
- **Language and immigration-related risks:** Many residents face challenges related to linguistic isolation or immigration status, which further increase social vulnerability and limit access to resources and aid.

- Rural infrastructure fragility: The region faces frequent communication outages, road closures due to flooding or landslides, and limited power backup systems that increase exposure and hinder emergency response. It also experiences water system challenges and lacks basic infrastructure for essential services, such as a laundromat and even access to clean water at the high school. Additional community challenges and solutions are detailed in the 2019 report, [Planning for Equity: Pescadero Town Planning Initiative](#).

We have not been able to access a detailed explanation of the map's methodology, but based on outcomes, we are concerned that these dynamics may not be adequately accounted for. We are also curious how flood risk was derived, as the map appears inconsistent with site-specific models we've developed for the South Coast community using our own data. We were unaware of this process until recently—had we known earlier, we would have engaged sooner. We would welcome the opportunity to share locally informed data and perspectives that could improve the accuracy and equity of this important tool.

We respectfully recommend refining the methodology so that climate vulnerability designations—and the critical funding decisions tied to them—more accurately represent real-world conditions.

Thank you again for your leadership in developing tools to guide equitable climate investments, and for the opportunity to contribute to this process.

Sincerely,



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Cc: Senator Josh Becker

Assemblymember Marc Berman

San Mateo County Supervisor Ray Mueller