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CONTACT:

Kay Cuajunco, [619-889-7865](tel:619-889-7865), kay@caleja.org

New Law Ensures Local Governments Include Environmental Justice in General Plans

Governor Brown signs SB 1000 for Equitable Land Use

Sacramento, CA | September 26, 2016 — On Saturday, September 24th, Governor Brown signed into law SB 1000 by Senator Connie Leyva (D-Chino) which will improve local planning efforts to reduce disproportionate environmental and health impacts on California's most vulnerable residents by ensuring that local governments include an Environmental Justice (EJ) Element in General Plans. The bill was co-sponsored by the [California Environmental Justice Alliance](#) and [Center on Community Action and Environmental Justice](#), and also received broad support from organizations, planners, and residents.

"SB 1000 provides a critical mechanism for cities and counties to identify disadvantaged communities within their boundaries and develop plans to reverse the longtime neglect these communities have suffered," said Penny Newman, Executive Director of Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice. "With these plans, cities and counties will have a more competitive edge to accessing the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Funds designated for these communities. It's a win – win and we are thankful for the leadership of Senator Connie Leyva for authoring this bill."

Many environmental inequities in California can be traced back to poor land use planning. With SB 1000 now law, more cities will join Jurupa Valley and National City in incorporating a new EJ Element in their General Plans. Land use planning is an empowering tool for communities to reimagine how neighborhoods can look and local governments can now proactively plan for and address environmental justice concerns at the outset when developing long-term goals, policies and visions for the growth of their cities.

"The quality of life of National City's residents has improved because of the city's successful adoption of California's first Environmental Justice Element," said Carolina Martinez, Senior Planner and Policy Advocate, [Environmental Health Coalition](#). "It has taken tremendous community engagement, resources, and time to undo land use mistakes in National City, but thanks to the EJ Element the city is now making healthier planning decisions. We thank Senator Connie Leyva and Governor Brown and look forward to other communities benefiting from an EJ Element the same way National City has to further the potential of equitable land use for cities across California."

SB 1000 gives California a state law to direct local governments to consider environmental justice since our state has not updated its land-use laws since the 1970s and our cities look much different today. Environmental justice advocates applaud Governor Brown for signing this critical bill into law that addresses the legacy of inequitable land-use practices and gives us a tool to map a path forward.

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California Environmental Justice Alliance is a statewide, community-led alliance that works to achieve environmental justice by advancing policy solutions. We unite the powerful local organizing of our members in the communities most impacted by environmental hazards – low-income communities and communities of color - to create comprehensive opportunities for change at a statewide level. We build the power of communities across California to create policies that will alleviate poverty and pollution. Together, we are growing the statewide movement for environmental health and social justice. www.caleja.org