



May 31, 2007

The Honorable Kevin de León
California State Assembly
State Capitol, Room 4140
Sacramento, CA 95814

SENT VIA FAX: (916) 319-2145

RE: AB 31 (De León)—SUPPORT

Dear Assembly Member de León:

Thank you for your leadership on Proposition 84 park bond funds. On behalf of the Alianza de los Pueblos del Río along with its member organizations -- Anahuak Youth Soccer Association, Mujeres de la Tierra, and The William C. Velásquez Institute -- and The City Project, we write to express our support of your bill, Assembly Bill 31, which seeks to ensure that Proposition 84 park funds are allocated through a competitive grants program, ensuring funds for park development and creation in underserved communities.

As you know, health studies show that green space and providing young people with places to play can have broad cumulative impacts on communities, including improved health of residents, lower crime rates, improved grades for school children and productivity for workers, and improved air and water quality. AB 31 would seek to provide those green spaces to the most underserved communities where their value would be greatest to the state because such facilities would be highly used. As you know, visitorship overall to national and state parks is declining and a wise investment in green spaces in the most underserved communities would also elevate the value of natural parks as well.

AB 31 targets Prop 84 bond funds to underserved communities suffering from significant lack of access to parks and recreational opportunities. These communities tend to suffer from higher rates of crime, health ailments, including obesity and asthma, and high unemployment and poverty rates, and also tend to be communities of color. The state of California would also benefit most from investment in green spaces in underserved communities in the fight to stop global warming and achieve climate justice. Parks can help cool urban areas and reduce the carbon footprint. Such land would otherwise most likely be used for economic activities that generate heat and carbon. This means that already burdened communities would pay in terms of other opportunity costs for the benefit of parks. Green construction can also create green jobs for local workers.

AB 31 builds upon the existing Urban Parks and Murray-Hayden Parks Programs funded under Propositions 12 and 40, modifying the criteria to ensure that underserved communities in the highest need of improved park access can compete effectively in a grant process, while also

providing technical assistance grants and support. It was clearly the intent of Prop 84 proponents to bring health and environmental stewardship to underserved communities through parks. It is important that competitive levels be clearly defined through clearly stated criteria. AB31 ensures that those qualified through that criteria will be able to compete with a fair expectation that their applications will be accorded a reasonable level of review and have a reasonable chance to prevail while meeting a threshold that is of value to the whole state. Reducing obesity, lowering crime, improving air quality, climate justice and reversing the carbon foot-print in some of its highest levels of intensity is of great value to California.

We support AB 31 as it seeks to revitalize California's park-poor communities and promote healthy living in neighborhoods across the state. We appreciate the opportunity to give you input on these issues and the fact that that AB 31 largely reflects our priorities and suggestions to address park poverty in communities throughout the state. We look forward to working with you as AB 31 moves forward in the legislative process.

Sincerely,

Raúl Macías, President Anahuak Youth Soccer Association and member of the Alianza de los Pueblos del Río

Irma Muñoz, Founder and President of Mujeres de la Tierra and Alianza de los Pueblos del Río Chair

Antonio González, President of the William C. Velásquez and Member of the Alianza de los Pueblos del Río

Robert García, Executive Director, The City Project, and Counsel to the Alianza de los Pueblos del Río