

*The 2023–2025 Washington State Budget is likely to allocate over \$142 billion*, including billions in funds that affect climate and environmental justice and frontline communities. But despite state laws and federal orders requiring just investments in direct benefits to overburdened communities, there's little clarity on how that will be implemented. ***At stake is the determination of “benefits” and of “overburdened communities” and how the state will be accountable*** to communities who will see the greatest impacts from climate change and face the greatest barriers to a regenerative economy. ***Unless the legislature acts, business as usual may carry the day.***

**Starting with this budget, the Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) Act requires that ALL spending by affected agencies meet a goal of at least 40% investment in overburdened communities.** Drawing from the framework Front and Centered co-developed for I-1631, additional state law clarifies that benefits must reach vulnerable populations, be direct and meaningful, reduce cumulative risk, and meet community-led and -identified needs. President Biden's Justice40 Initiative clarifies how federal funds must be targeted.

While significant investments are proposed for climate impacts and frontline communities, **the Governor's proposed budget is vague at best on these equity and environmental justice legal obligations**, including the largest investments in electrification of homes and air quality. The budget does align more clearly with some Front and Centered top priorities including climate impacts on workers, energy bill assistance and weatherization, and transit investments. However, these dollars are a relatively small portion of the overall fund, and they are spread across state agencies rather than clearly demonstrating impact for communities.

***Front and Centered is calling on Washington State to use clear, transparent definitions and accounting of climate and environmental justice investments to meet their legal obligations:***

- **Overburdened communities must be designated for transparency**, including Tribal lands, areas in the [Environmental Health Disparities Map](#) ranked 7+, and areas of community-defined impact.
- **Benefits must be clearly defined in advance, reach vulnerable populations, and be specified to investments that improve social determinants of environmental health and support community led solutions** to pollution, the impacts of climate change, and building a regenerative economy. Investments in risky technologies or programs that make another problem worse must be excluded.

**Specific community priorities for climate investments include:**

- **Community Climate and Environmental Planning:** Establish the participatory budgeting of funds for overburdened communities by those communities themselves, and provide planning funds to help get project funding ready. These efforts can be supported by a \$10 million community assemblies fund developed between communities and presented to agencies.
- **Frequent, Accessible Public Transportation Statewide:** Spend transportation dollars on reducing disparities in transit access and safe sidewalks to get to transit without a car.
- **Energy Justice:** Launch a statewide Energy Assistance Trust to prevent disconnections from utilities and ensure that low-income households spend no more than 3% of their income on power, through bill assistance, weatherization, and full electrification and elimination of fossil-fueled homes.
- **Climate Resiliency:** Support workers and communities most impacted by climate change with wage reliefs, protective equipment, assistance centers, and repair of damages.
- **Green Infrastructure and Food Systems:** Support for ecological restoration that feeds us, reduces pollution, and prevents disasters like flooding, deforestation, and loss of cultural resources.