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Attorney General Brown Issues Multistate Guidance Affirming Legality and Necessity of Environmental Justice Initiatives *Guidance Clarifies Recent Federal Actions Seeking to Weaken and Eliminate Environmental Justice Efforts*

BALTIMORE, MD (June 17, 2025) – Attorney General Anthony G. Brown today joined a coalition of 13 attorneys general in issuing multistate [guidance](#) to businesses, nonprofits, and other organizations affirming the necessity and legality of environmental justice initiatives. The guidance reinforces that despite the Trump administration’s efforts to brand these critical activities as illegal, public and private entities can still lawfully engage in environmental justice work to ensure a healthy environment for all people to live, play, work, learn, and worship.

“Programs that ensure all communities—especially those historically overburdened by pollution—have equal access to clean air, safe water, and healthy environments are not just legal, they are essential,” **said Attorney General Brown**. “Our Office will always support efforts that protect Marylanders from environmental and public health threats, and that guarantee every person the chance to live and thrive in a safe, sustainable environment.”

Efforts to Advance Environmental Justice Remain Essential

Environmental justice – which has its roots in our country’s civil, economic, labor, and immigrants’ rights movements – aims to ensure that every person has equal access to clean air; clean water; safe and healthy food; a healthy, sustainable, and stable environment; and protection from the impacts of climate change. Despite over 40 years of progress since the founding of the environmental justice movement, the principles and practices that the Trump administration has attempted to undermine remain both necessary and urgent. Racial segregation, redlining, and disinvestment have all laid the foundation for persistent environmental and public health disparities.

Evidence-based studies and lived experience demonstrate that communities of color, indigenous people and tribal nations, low-income, rural, and unincorporated communities, people with disabilities, and non-English speaking communities routinely face disproportionate environmental and health burdens. From lead-poisoning to pollution-related asthma in children,

to the presence of waste dumping and contaminated sites, and excessive car and truck traffic, to extreme temperatures, flooding and wildfires, over-burdened communities face formidable barriers to their well-being and opportunities.

These challenges are exacerbated by climate change, which is causing environmental dangers that lead to greater instability, economic hardship, and shortened life spans. Environmental justice initiatives aim to overcome this division, developing solutions to persistent harms and advancing public health, safety, well-being, and prosperity across communities.

Recent Federal Actions Do Not Impact the Legality of Environmental Justice Efforts

Since day one, the Trump administration has issued Executive Orders and memoranda attempting to undermine environmental justice, a longstanding federal policy. The administration has terminated environmental and climate justice programs and grants; discontinued environmental enforcement actions; and called for legal challenges to state environmental justice and climate laws. These actions distort the meaning and attempt to cast doubt on the legality of environmental justice work.

The president cannot change or dismantle laws passed by Congress, nor can his Executive Orders or agency memoranda change the protections afforded by the U.S. Constitution and other federal and state laws. In fact, civil rights and environmental laws support public and private efforts to advance environmental justice, as does the U.S. Constitution.

The guidance is directed to the country, state, tribal, and local governments, nonprofit and charitable entities, businesses, and neighborhood-based groups that are currently engaging in efforts to restore and protect environmental and public health with solutions that are informed and improved by the lived experiences of thousands of communities. Through its guidance, the coalition stands ready to implement and enforce the nation's laws to advance environmental justice and will continue working in collaboration with communities and organizations to support and defend these efforts across the country.

In issuing this guidance, Attorney General Brown joins the attorneys general of Arizona, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawai'i, Illinois, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Rhode Island, New York, Oregon, and Vermont.

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