

**Justification for Resources to Low Income Oversight Board to Better Fulfill its Mission with
serving Disadvantaged Low Income Communities across California.**

Situational Analysis: The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) serves the public interest by protecting consumers and ensuring the provision of safe, reliable utility service and infrastructure at reasonable rates, with a commitment to environmental enhancement and a healthy California economy. This regulatory body regulates utility services, stimulates innovation, and promotes competitive markets where possible.

The Low Income Oversight Board (LIOB) - is codified in California statute – and their statutory role it to advise the CPUC and upon request the California State Legislature given the energy, telecommunications and water regulatory impacts on California’s low income communities.

California’s utility services total in the billions of dollars and their impact on those that are the least able to pay is significant. As the most populous state in the nation, California presents a daunting challenge to the LIOB when it comes to meeting the basic needs of the poor with utility services, public-benefit programs and bills. The industries that these regulated utilities operate in is evolving; mandates from government are continuous and the potential to generate employment with these transitions is great.

In order to best meet these challenges of this resource evolution the LIOB must be fully engaged. Unfortunately, the LIOB meets only four to five times a year and the bandwidth to provide the most effective oversight and advocacy are limited. We seek to remedy that.

Recommendations: More resources for the LIOB are requested to perform and produce the following:

- Two additional staff people to assist the LIOB with the assigned Commissioner, staff and the Chair of the LIOB in developing the Agenda. The LIOB agenda should be the byproduct of more interaction with CPUC staff on relevant issues confronting the CPUC and low-income communities. A staff services analyst should fill one of these positions.
- Full LIOB meeting minutes are not entered into the official deliberation of the CPUC, nor the official proceedings nor the final decision making processes. We believe that the full commission staff, stakeholders and various decision-makers could benefit from the full board’s deliberations and recommendations.
- The subcommittee meetings of the LIOB are not memorialized for the record, a staff person is recommended for this purpose.

With this additional bandwidth the LIOB is in a much stronger position to help the existing and developing agenda that the CPUC has with disadvantaged communities (i.e. SB 350, Workforce Education & Training, ESA, CARE and Telecommunications).

Given this greater level of assistance rendered by the LIOB, the board may need to meet more than four to five times a year. With access to additional resources, the LIOB workload should and would increase making that necessary and possible.

Outcomes

- Greater Stakeholder Engagement: Many of the current and potential interactions between the LIOB and stakeholders (utilities, advocacy groups, etc.) rely on the ability of individual LIOB members to contribute their own time. While this is part of the commitment to public service, it does have limitations that the presence of a minimal amount of staff (as described above) could solve.
- Increased Capacity for the LIOB to Make Informed Decisions: Currently the CPUC has a limited ability to answer questions from the LIOB in a timely matter. The presence of one or two FTE (as described above) would enable all LIOB members to ask questions ahead of quarterly board and committee meetings, enabling the discussions to be more substantive and have some follow through. This is critical to achieving goals and desired outcomes.
- Increased Outreach and Service Levels for Low-Income Ratepayers: The most important outcome of any investment of resources into the LIOB must be greater and/or improved services for low-income rate payers.