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Alameda County Residents Urge Community Representation in Local Energy Choice Program

Labor and environmental justice advocates hail formation of Alameda County Community Choice Energy program that prioritizes local clean energy development

HAYWARD, Calif. – Over 100 Alameda County residents and organizations gathered at Hayward City Hall on Monday evening to urge the newly formed East Bay Community Energy (EBCE) governing board to expand access to renewable energy and community representation in the region, as a new Community Choice energy program takes shape in Alameda County.

“East Bay families and communities deserve energy that works for us and is produced by us,” said Jessica Tovar, organizer with the Local Clean Energy Alliance. “Community Choice energy offers the potential to create local clean energy jobs, while empowering our communities with local control over our energy system. Now, we need to make sure that the public has a seat at the table as decisions are made that will shape Alameda County’s energy future.”

With the support of 11 cities plus the unincorporated communities throughout Alameda County, the Board of Supervisors recently approved a new Community Choice energy program, which will put a public agency in charge of energy procurement decisions, rather than the incumbent utility. Community Choice will allow local communities to get electricity at or below current cost, while investing in locally generated renewable electricity and energy efficiency. The program can pave the way for Alameda County to achieve a goal of 100% renewable energy through the EBCE program, create family sustaining and union jobs plus other community benefits. Other cities in California, including San Francisco and San Diego, have used similar Community Choice programs as a tool in pursuit of 100% renewable energy.

“On behalf of over 134,034 working families,” said Josie Camacho, head of Alameda County’s 126 local unions, “We strongly support a Community Choice energy program that has Labor’s voice and representation on the program’s governing board. We must have local union-trained and union built projects that provide a path for sustainable careers as we promote a clean energy economy here in Alameda County.”

Monday night’s meeting represents the first time that the newly formed EBCE’s governing board, made up of elected officials from participating cities and Alameda County, has convened to begin the process of launching the program, scheduled for late fall of this year.

Community Choice is supported by a broad coalition of community and environmental justice organizations, and the Alameda Labor Council, which includes the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), the California Nurses Association (CNA), the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), and many other unions.