March 3, 2017

The Honorable Bob Wieckowski, Chair
Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee #2
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Richard Bloom, Chair
Assembly Budget Subcommittee #3
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SUPPORT $22 Million for Climate Investments in Urban Forestry

Dear Chairman Wieckowski and Chairman Bloom:

On behalf of California’s urban forestry community, we are writing to encourage your support for continuing the State’s investment in CAL FIRE’s Urban and Community Forestry Program through the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund as proposed in the Governor’s 2017-18 Budget.

Urban forestry plays a significant role in meeting the greenhouse gas reduction targets set forth in AB 32 and SB 32 as well as meeting the mandates set forth in AB 1532, AB 1550 and SB 535. Continued investments through CAL FIRE’s Urban and Community Forestry Program in both the short-term and long-term will support hundreds of projects throughout California that engage communities in myriad greening activities that include community gardens, bioswales, and planning, planting and stewarding trees and these other valued resources. We believe an appropriation this year of $22 million – approximately 1% of the overall proposed GGRF expenditure plan – will build on the success of the nearly 50 urban forestry projects previously funded through the Climate Investments Program, while also helping to address a 600% oversubscription to the Program in 2014.

Nature based solutions, such as urban forestry, have direct and quantifiable GHG benefits while also providing significant climate adaptation co-benefits that can have a transformative impact on communities across California, particularly disadvantaged communities hit first and worst by climate change. This climate-smart approach captures and cleans our water, reduces energy usage connected with urban heat island affect, and sequesters greenhouse gases through natural infrastructure. Furthermore, when these resources are integrated with other efforts to reduce GHG emissions in other sectors, such as affordable housing, climate resilience and public benefits are amplified and investments are more cost-effective. They can also provide incentives to regions and communities to integrate green infrastructure into climate plans such as Sustainable Communities Strategies and Climate Action Plans.

The Governor’s proposed State Budget recognizes the pressing need to sustain existing funding commitments for urban forestry while simultaneously addressing critical environmental justice needs. These investments are especially critical in light of recent recommendations highlighted in the proposed Scoping Plan and Forest Carbon Plan that call for increasing total urban tree canopy statewide by as much as 33 percent above current levels.

We applaud your leadership in providing funding from the GGRF last year for CAL FIRE’s Urban and Community Forestry Program. We strongly urge you to continue that support now and into the future for urban forestry projects that create jobs, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, builds communities and invests in the health of California’s residents.

We urge the Legislature to support this proposal as Budget discussions progress.

Sincerely,