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Proposal for Collaboration on Outreach to Disadvantaged Communities for Mercury Thermostat Disposal and Energy Efficiency

Additional submitted attachment is included below.



October 18, 2024

Chair Hochschild and Members of the Commission
California Energy Commission (CEC)
715 P Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

CC: California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC)
Energy Division
505 Van Ness Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102

Re: Proposal for Collaboration on Outreach to Disadvantaged Communities for Mercury
Thermostat Disposal and Energy Efficiency

Disadvantaged Communities Advisory Group;

I am writing on behalf of Thermostat Care, a state-mandated safe disposal program for mercury thermostats. Our program's primary mission is to safeguard public health and the environment through the safe disposal of mercury thermostats, which naturally aligns with and supports California's broader energy efficiency objectives. We are reaching out to propose a collaboration that could significantly enhance our collective efforts in serving Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) throughout the state, as mandated by the Mercury Thermostat Collection Act of 2021 (now California Health and Safety Code Division 20 Chapter 6.5 Article 10.2.2).

Thermostat Care offers a \$30 incentive for each mercury thermostat returned by California residents. This initiative not only removes harmful mercury from homes but also encourages the transition to modern, energy-efficient thermostats that support building electrification and reduced energy consumption. We believe our program can serve as a valuable resource in your ongoing efforts to engage with and support DACs, particularly in the realm of energy efficiency and environmental health.

Key aspects of our program that align with your mission include:

1. Greater Accessibility for Energy Efficiency Programs and Technology
 - a. Our \$30 incentive increases the affordability and accessibility of smart thermostats for Californians.
 - b. By making smart thermostats more affordable, we help overcome barriers that keep Californians from participating in energy efficiency programs.
2. Integrating Environmental Health with Energy Efficiency

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- a. Our initiative prioritizes environmental health through the safe disposal of mercury thermostats, which concurrently supports California's energy efficiency goals by facilitating the adoption of smart thermostats.
- b. This integrated approach makes energy efficiency messaging more robust and meaningful by addressing the environmental health impacts of adopting new technology and disposing of obsolete technology.
3. Well-Resourced Education and Outreach
 - a. Our program has allocated funding for targeted outreach, including advertising campaigns (social media, local radio, community newspapers) and partnerships with community organizations. These resources enable us to effectively reach diverse Californian communities, including those in rural areas, disadvantaged communities (DACs), and low-income neighborhoods, with multilingual materials and specialist support.

The Mercury Thermostat Collection Act of 2021 aligns our mission closely with the goals of the CEC and CPUC, particularly in serving disadvantaged, low-income, and rural communities. Specifically:

- Section 25214.8.11.5(b)(1) mandates that we ensure convenient collection methods "in all parts of the state, including within rural communities, disadvantaged communities, and low-income communities."
- Sections 25214.8.11.5(c)(12-13) require us to "coordinate program activities" with both the Public Utilities Commission and the California Energy Commission.

We see great potential in leveraging our program to support and enhance your existing outreach initiatives. We can collaborate in the following ways:

1. Integrated Messaging: Incorporate information about safe mercury thermostat disposal and our incentive program into your existing energy efficiency and building electrification communications.
2. Community Events: Explore opportunities to participate in select community events, offering on-site collection of old mercury thermostats and education about energy-efficient alternatives, as resources allow.
3. Cross-Promotional Outreach:
 - a. Include information about our program and incentive on your rebates/incentives web page.
 - b. Share program information with relevant stakeholders through your networks.
 - c. Collaborate on promotion and outreach for events or initiatives in your area of service.
4. Enhanced Incentives: Explore ways to combine our \$30 incentive with other energy efficiency programs to create more compelling offers for DAC residents.

This collaboration could help us collectively:

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- Protect public health by removing mercury from homes in vulnerable communities
- Advance energy equity by increasing accessibility to energy-efficient technologies
- Support the state's decarbonization goals by promoting the adoption of smart, efficient thermostats
- Amplify the reach and impact of both our programs in DACs
- Provide a more comprehensive approach to energy efficiency that includes environmental health considerations

We are eager to align our efforts with the Disadvantaged Communities Advisory Group's mission to ensure that environmental and economic benefits reach California's most vulnerable communities. We believe that by combining our resources and expertise, we can create a more impactful and holistic approach to serving DACs.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this proposal further and explore how we can work together to better serve disadvantaged communities across the state. Thank you for your consideration, and we look forward to the possibility of partnering with you on this important initiative.

Sincerely,

Allie Shields

Project Manager

Thermostat Care