



EQUALITY CALIFORNIA

March 1, 2022

The Honorable Alice Reynolds, President
California Public Utilities Commission
505 Van Ness Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102

Re: Establishment of a Minimum of 1.5% Procurement Goal for LGBT Business Enterprises [R 21-010-03]

Dear President Reynolds,

I am writing on behalf of Equality California, the nation's largest statewide LGBTQ+ organization, to respectfully urge you and your fellow commissioners to approve the proposed February 9 decision to establish a 1.5% utility procurement goal for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender business enterprises [LGBTBEs].

For the past 30 years, the Utility Supplier Diversity Program has made a huge difference for Californians who have often been disadvantaged in the business sphere. From the very start, the program has addressed the inequity in contracting in electrical, gas, and telephone utilities for women and minority-owned businesses. Since then, our state has expanded the program to be even more effective, including disabled veteran businesses and LGBTBEs.

Equality California strongly supported then-Assemblymember Rich Gordon's 2014 legislation to expand the program to include our LGBTQ+ community. For decades, the LGBTQ community has faced discrimination, but this law finally offered some equal footing for LGBT businesses with other diverse businesses.

However, the implementation of this law has delayed progress as we have waited nearly eight years for an LGBTBE procurement goal. Unfortunately, biases within some industry sectors create barriers to entry. A recent Williams Institute study found that the unemployment rate in the LGBTQ+ community is nearly double the national average. A second study found that nearly half of the LGBTQ+ workforce dealt with unfair and biased treatment at work during their lives, with 10 percent experiencing discrimination or harassment last year. With this new aspirational goal, the walls impeding progress are being torn down, and we are one step closer to more inclusivity.

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The CPUC proposed decision's stair-step approach establishes an immediate goal for utilities to achieve. Stepping up the goals from 0.5% in 2022 to 1.0% in 2023 to 1.5% in 2024 allows the utilities to adjust to the new procurement policies. Most importantly, the LGBTBE procurement goal reaches 1.5%, which puts LGBTQ+ businesses on equal footing with others in the program.

Society's acceptance of the LGBTQ+ community continues to increase — and California has been an important leader in this progress — but full equality has yet to be realized. This proposed decision moves us ever more in the right direction.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tony Hoang". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Tony Hoang
Executive Director