

Tuesday, July 28, 2026

Update on Environmental Justice Council Special Meeting about HEAL 2.0

Dear Representative Reeves,

On June 23, 2026, the Environmental Justice Council (Council) held a special meeting to hear initial thoughts from Tribal Nations and community members on if and how the Council should engage in efforts to amend the HEAL Act. Though the Council voted at that meeting to participate in discussions about HEAL Act amendments and directed staff to engage in these conversations, there were several concerns raised in the meeting by Council members, Tribal representatives, and community members before the vote that I want to elevate (see attached meeting summary for more details). For example:

- First and foremost, concerns were raised about the level of Tribal and community engagement and related transparency of the process. Speakers noted that Tribes were not included in the original drafting of HEAL, and they emphasized the importance of any proposed amendments to HEAL being drafted in solidarity with Tribes and communities.
- Several speakers asked what the goal is of opening the HEAL Act now, emphasizing the need for a clear issue statement and outcome goals.
- Speakers noted the need to conduct an assessment on the impacts of HEAL from the perspectives of the Tribes and communities centered in the law before amending or opening up the law.
- Staff provided a briefing on the partnership meetings you have convened on HEAL 2.0. Questions were raised regarding the composition of the group, facilitation of the meetings, and the goals of the meetings—further emphasizing a need for transparency, clarity, and communication.

Central to all these concerns is the quality of Tribal and community engagement that sets the standard for accountability in policymaking. The Council's first priority when established was to address community engagement from an environmental justice perspective. The Council composed, adopted, and published its [Community Engagement Values and Guidance](#). That statement tracks closely with similar guidance by other state Councils and the [Principles of Environmental Justice](#)

approved at the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991. The Council also adopted a [Statement](#) on Tribal Sovereignty; Self Determination; and Free, Prior, and Informed Consent.

In order to understand the law's effectiveness, we recommend that you speak with those experiencing the deepest impacts and who are closest to the harm. The Council's view on engagement and accountability is, per the HEAL Act, to move beyond the status quo of performative engagement toward co-creation and shared decision-making with Tribes and communities, on issues that directly and deeply impact them. The law directly names Tribes, and “overburdened communities,” and “vulnerable populations,” and it is essential the communities the law was created to protect, are consulted by centering the [principles and practices of environmental justice](#).

With this in mind, the Council would appreciate an update on the Tribal and community engagement you have already done as you consider opening the HEAL Act, and what your engagement plans are moving forward.

On our end, the Council is exploring what we may be able to do with our limited capacity to hold Tribal and community forums this summer to get guidance on the Council’s legislative-related work, including but not limited to Council positions/input on possible HEAL amendments. We would welcome an opportunity to have thought partnership with you as we each plan out our engagement for the coming months. **Would you be open to meeting again so we can better understand your Tribal and community engagement efforts to date and to discuss next steps for engagement and outreach?**

I have copied the EJ Council’s Executive Committee here for their awareness.

Sincerely,

~Sierra Rotakhina