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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### *Major funding opportunity for local parks opens, with special emphasis on helping low-income communities*

**SACRAMENTO, CA, APRIL 2, 2019** — This year, \$255 million in state funds were made available to cities and other local governments to create new parks and introduce new recreation opportunities specifically in California's low-income communities. Local agencies have been invited to [apply](#) to the California Department of Parks and Recreation to secure these funds for their community. The funds are specifically allocated to critically underserved communities, with an eye to increasing health equity and reducing health disparities.

Passed in June 2018, Proposition 68 allocated \$4 billion in bond funds to improve the availability and quality of parks. \$720 million of those funds are earmarked to create new parks and recreational opportunities in underserved communities across California over the next three years. On January 30, California State Parks released the final Application Guide for the Statewide Park Program (SPP), which offers the first third of these funds. Applications are due August 5, 2019.

According to researchers at the University of Miami, parks play a significant role in creating healthier communities by improving physical and emotional health, promoting social cohesion, boosting local economies, protecting the environment and making neighborhoods more attractive. An American Journal of Public Health study shows that those living near park and recreation facilities are five times more likely to exercise weekly.

Despite their benefits, parks are not distributed equitably across the state, with low-income areas more likely to be park poor than higher income areas. A Los Angeles County Department of Public Health study showed that in Los Angeles County, for example, high income neighborhoods have 10 times more park space per capita than low-income areas. Predominantly white neighborhoods have almost 20 times more park acres per capita than African-American neighborhoods and over 50 times more acres than Latino neighborhoods. These communities suffer from disproportionately higher rates of obesity and chronic disease.

**New Toolkit Released to Assist Local Leaders**

[Public Health Advocates](#), an advocacy nonprofit with 20 years of experience working with cities, and [Kounkuey Design Initiative](#) (KDI), a nonprofit design and community development organization, are teaming up to help cities with the greatest health disparities successfully apply for Prop 68 park bond funds through Proposition 68's Statewide Parks and Community Revitalization Program.

"It's not surprising that poorer communities are at a disadvantage when competing for these funds. They don't traditionally have the grant writers, advocates and influencers that their wealthier neighbors do, which all help to win funding, or even know about the opportunities in the first place," says **Dr. Harold Goldstein, executive director at Public Health Advocates**. "That's why we are focusing our efforts on helping the most in-need cities apply for these funds."

In 2006, a similar park bond raised \$5.4 billion for nature conservancy but included just \$400 million, less than 10 percent, for parks in low-income, park-poor communities. Less than half of the funds allocated specifically for low-income areas were awarded.

"To ensure these communities have the resources to access the state funds, we're working with Public Health Advocates to share a Park Bond Equity Toolkit and a series of workshops, which will help every local park agency, regardless of size, location and income level, compete for these park funding opportunities," says **Chelina Odbert, executive director at KDI**. "By engaging community members to assert their needs and priorities, we will ensure that park funding is spent in the right places and the right ways."

The [Park Bond Equity Toolkit](#) includes best practices and suggested engagement methods for community-based planning of public spaces. The user-friendly resource is designed to help applicants engage key stakeholders at decision-making points, including determining park needs, prioritizing desired facilities and creating site plans."

Cities can apply for park bond funds from California Parks and Recreation Department's Statewide Parks and Community Revitalization Program [here](#). The Park Bond Equity Toolkit and other resources from Public Health Advocates and KDI can be found [here](#). The project is funded by Kaiser Permanente, The Gilbert Foundation, The California Wellness Foundation and The California Endowment. Communities interested in additional assistance accessing these funds can contact Alfred Mata at [AM@PHAdvocates.org](mailto:AM@PHAdvocates.org).

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*Public Health Advocates is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that brings a public health lens to some of the most important social justice issues of our day. We leverage decades of successful state and local campaign experience to help communities change the entrenched systems that perpetuate racial, economic and health disparities. PHAdvocates has helped more than 200 California cities establish local policies promoting the health of their residents. For more information, visit: [PHAdvocates.org](http://PHAdvocates.org).*

*Kounkuey Design Initiative (KDI) is a Los Angeles based design and community development nonprofit that partners with under-resourced communities to advance equity and activate their unrealized potential. KDI staff are planners, architects and development experts who believe that participatory planning and design are key to sustainable and equitable community development. For more information, visit: <https://www.kounkuey.org>.*