

THE BREATHE ACT



SECTION 3:

ALLOCATING NEW MONEY TO BUILD HEALTHY,
SUSTAINABLE & EQUITABLE COMMUNITIES
FOR ALL PEOPLE

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Section 3 of the BREATHE Act invests funds into specific areas that are proven to ensure all communities may thrive regardless of the racial, immigration status, or economic make up of that community. Section 3 dreams bigger, acknowledging and repairing the harm of decades of community divestment from non-punitive approaches to safety and wellbeing. The Section is broken into the five areas that will receive these added resources:

- ❖ Education Justice
- ❖ Health & Family Justice
- ❖ Environmental Justice
- ❖ Economic Justice
- ❖ Housing Justice

In each Subsection, Section 3 of the BREATHE Act establishes or expands a number of federal programs and investments—for example, paid leave and free college—that directly secure fundamental rights to individuals nationwide. The bill also establishes competitive grants to spur equity-focused State and local reforms. These competitive grants reward jurisdictions for making much-needed changes and dedicating their expertise

to the specific areas. On receiving those dollars, they will be able to deepen and catalyze those efforts—allowing localities to be more innovative, create more jobs, and produce even more numerous and sustainable success outcomes.

All dollars distributed pursuant to Section 3 must go to programs that are ADA compliant, open to all people regardless of immigration status, fully non-carceral, and earmarked for community-based organizations wherever possible. All competitive grant applicants must use a participatory process for designing and implementing their proposed programming, including direct participation and leadership by people who are directly impacted by the issue area. Additionally, Section 3 of the BREATHE Act establishes an Undersecretary for Racial and Economic Equity in each of the major federal



EDUCATION JUSTICE (Subsection 2)

Education is a fundamental right that has for too long been denied to Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and other communities of color. The programs in Subsection 1 are designed to ensure that all people have access to a free, high-quality, equitable system of education.

- ❖ The BREATHE Act **expands and secures funding for low-income schools and certain populations,** namely by:
 - Quadrupling Title I funding and making such funding mandatory rather than discretionary;
 - Making funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act mandatory rather than discretionary; and
 - Making full funding of PELL grants mandatory rather than discretionary.
- ❖ The BREATHE Act **makes major investments that will make higher education affordable and accessible to all.** These include:



- Incorporating The College for All Act (S. 806), which provides free college and student loan forgiveness;
- Offering expanded supports—including food and housing—for college students; and
- Incorporating the Community College Student Success Act (H.R. 3578), which helps higher education institutions boost degree completion or transfer rates.

◆ The Education Justice Grant is a competitive grant that will **incentivize State and local governments to make education equity-focused policy changes**, which include:

- Equalizing school funding and otherwise ensuring educational equity, including through programs that ensure wraparound, trauma-informed services at all schools that are low-income and limiting the expansion of programs that encourage school privatization; and
- Decriminalizing schools and otherwise addressing youth criminalization, including by developing a time-bound plan for closing all juvenile criminal-legal detention facilities.

In turn, grant dollars may be used for:

- Increasing student supports, including wraparound services and programs that provide WiFi at home;
- Developing curricula that critically examine the political, economic, and social impacts of colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, racism, white supremacy, genocide against Indigenous peoples, patriarchy, and slavery;
- Free transportation;
- Violence reduction and gender justice, including advocacy and prevention services related to sexual assault, harassment, and other violence; and
- School infrastructure.

HEALTH & FAMILY JUSTICE (Subsection 3)

A history of systemic racism, ableism, medical violence, and neglect within the healthcare system, combined with denial of universal, affordable, competent and quality care, has placed access to medical care out of reach for the majority of Black people. The Subsection 3 programs are a first and important step—alongside high-quality, equitable, and universal healthcare, such as through Medicare-for-All—toward ensuring health equity. This Subsection also protects and preserves family bonds and addresses child poverty through targeted measures.

- ◆ The BREATHE Act **ensures economic security for children**, namely through:
 - Establishing a Universal Child Benefit that provides a universal monthly benefit of \$400 for children ages 6 to 18 or \$500 for children under 6;
 - Providing all workers with 18 weeks of paid medical and family leave, including parental leave to care for newborn children;
 - Providing full federal funding of prekindergarten, including funding for on-site, two-generational services for both parents and children;
 - Universal school meals for all children; and
 - A federal program to provide baby boxes to expecting parents.



- ❖ The BREATHE Act **lays the foundation for reimagining the inequitable, harmful system of child welfare,** namely through a Commission to Redesign the Child Welfare System.
- ❖ The BREATHE Act **expands access to reproductive justice,** namely through incorporating the Each Woman Act (H.R. 1692) and thereby repealing the Hyde Amendment.
- ❖ The Health and Family Justice Grant is a competitive grant that will **incentivize State and local governments to make health equity-focused policy changes,** which include:
 - Ensuring health equity, including equity for Black, Latinx, AAPI, Indigenous, LGBT, low-income, homeless, disabled, and undocumented individuals, such as through addressing food apartheid;
 - Expanding healthcare access, such as through funding community health workers, including but not limited to, doulas, health coaches, patient navigators, peer support specialists, and outreach workers; and
 - Maintaining family bonds, such as by reducing the incidence of child removal in the child welfare system.

In turn, grant dollars may be used for:

- Nutrition access (e.g., developing and sustaining food cooperatives & incentivizing the location of grocery stores);
- Healthcare access (e.g., expanding or enhancing the services offered at neighborhood-based health centers that include reproductive health); and
- Building the care economy (e.g., providing out-of-school time care).

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE (Subsection 4)

The climate crisis is a moral imperative that requires immediate, bold action, including enactment of a Green New Deal that dramatically reduces greenhouse gas emissions nationally and invests in transformative, equitable solutions to address the racial injustice and climate crises. Subsection 4 begins this work by creating new programs that expressly address environmental justice while beginning the transition to a clean, renewable economy.

- ❖ The BREATHE Act **increases environmental accountability for federal programs,** specifically by:
 - Creating a cross-agency Equity Impact Mapping initiative that tracks environmental impacts, pollution hotspots, public health data, and income inequality;
 - Requiring an Equity Screen on major federal policy actions; and
 - Guaranteeing that 40% of all federal climate-related spending, including funding through the Environmental & Climate Justice grant, will be invested in “Environmental Justice” communities.



- ◆ The Environmental & Climate Justice Grant is a competitive grant that will **incentivize State and local governments to make environmental equity-focused policy changes**, which include:
 - Addressing climate vulnerability;
 - Ensuring a just transition (e.g., ensuring that climate spending reach those communities that are most vulnerable to climate change & protecting natural resources within the jurisdiction); and
 - Promoting water and air justice and addressing pollution.

In turn, grant dollars may be used for:

- Energy justice (e.g., subsidizing community-owned sustainable energy solutions);
- Climate resilience (e.g., establishing and/or supporting conservation corps that will undertake land restoration, restoration and preservation of sacred sites, and other activities related to conservation);
- Transportation justice (e.g., overhauling transportation systems to eliminate pollution); and
- Enhancing accountability (e.g., cleaning up the previous destruction of Native American lands, such as through military testing).



ECONOMIC JUSTICE (Subsection 5)

The current unprecedented levels of income and wealth inequality are an economic, moral, and racial injustice crisis. The economy must be reconstructed to ensure that all workers have equal access to economic opportunities, dignity in labor, and discrimination free welfare and assistance programs.

- ❖ The BREATHE Act **creates a Universal Basic Income for low-income individuals by modifying the Earned Income Tax Credit to:**
 - ***Give all low-income families an allowance*** (i.e., eliminating the EITC phase-in so that households with no earnings receive the maximum \$2,000 benefit); and
 - ***Ensure equity and nondiscrimination in benefit payments*** (e.g., expanding the EITC to Puerto Rico and ITIN filers);
 - ***Ensure responsiveness to economic needs*** (e.g., require the Department of the Treasury to make the credit advanceable).
- ❖ The BREATHE Act **addresses the racial wealth gap** by incorporating the American Opportunity Accounts Act (S. 3766), which establishes a universal federal “baby bonds” program for all American children—a savings account that children can later use for higher education and other important investments.
- ❖ The BREATHE Act **catalyzes development of a jobs guarantee**, specifically by incorporating the Federal Jobs Guarantee Development Act (S. 2457), which establishes a three-year pilot program for a federal jobs guarantee in 15 high-need communities.
- ❖ The BREATHE Act **expands access to banks and addresses predatory lending** by incorporating the Postal Banking Act (S. 2755), which grants the U.S. Postal Service the power to provide basic financial services.

- ❖ The BREATHE Act **begins to address our inequitable tax system** through:
 - Repeal of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (i.e., Trump-GOP tax cuts), except for a few provisions;
 - A wealth tax;
 - An estate tax by incorporating the For the 99.8 Percent Act (S. 309);
 - Corporate tax reform;
 - Capital gains tax reform;
 - A financial transactions tax by incorporating the Wall Street Tax Act (S. 647);
 - Closing offshore loopholes by incorporating the Corporate Tax Dodging Prevention Act (S. 586); and
 - Laying the foundation for further reforms, specifically by creating a Federal Tax Commission that will propose changes to eliminate the racial wealth gap, increase racial and economic equity, and eliminate child poverty.
- ❖ The BREATHE Act **addresses occupational segregation**—where certain jobs are disproportionately funneled to particular racial, gender, or other groups—via a federal audit of funds that are authorized pursuant to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.
- ❖ The BREATHE Act **addresses United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) discrimination against Black farmers**, specifically by creating a USDA Undersecretary who is authorized to operate policies and programs that advance racial equity for Black farmers, Latinx farmers, Indigenous farmers, and other groups who have faced ongoing and historic systemic discrimination by the USDA.
- ❖ The BREATHE Act **creates a framework for addressing the systemic, racially discriminatory design of social welfare programs**, including Temporary Assistance for Needy Family, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs, and Child and Adult Care Food Program, by creating an independent Commission to Study Economic Security Program Redesign.

- ❖ A new Economic Justice Grant is a competitive grant that will **incentivize State and local governments to make economic equity-focused policy changes**, which include:
 - Addressing the primary issues that are causing wealth and income disparities jurisdiction-wide; and
 - Preserving the dignity of labor, such as by passing a Domestic Workers Bill of Rights, ensuring employers follow fair scheduling practices, & preventing the erosion of labor standards.

In turn, grant dollars may be used for:

- Enhancing job opportunities (e.g., career pathway, workforce development, and jobs training programs, including a preference for communities that were specifically targeted by redlining);
- Building community wealth (e.g., start-up funds for establishing worker-owned cooperatives); and
- Building community infrastructure (e.g., developing, building, and supporting organizational infrastructure for community-based, grassroots organizations).

HOUSING JUSTICE (Subsection 6)

Housing is a fundamental right that has for too long been made out-of-reach to Black, Latinx, Indigenous, and other communities of color. Especially given its history of racially discriminatory housing policies and practices, the federal government must ensure that historically excluded groups have meaningful access to affordable housing, as well as to home and land ownership.

- ❖ The BREATHE Act **authorizes substantial new federal investments in housing**, including:
 - A robust social housing program, including 12 million new and permanently affordable units, for individuals experiencing homelessness and extremely cost-burdened renters;
 - Major investments in affordable housing through the Housing Trust Fund, Capital Magnet Fund, Indian Housing Block Grant Program, and Native Hawaiian Housing Block Grant Program;
 - Addressing the backlog in public housing repairs;
 - Fully funding Section 8 vouchers for all who qualify, investments in a robust social housing program, dollars to address the Public Housing Capital Fund backlog, and fully funding Section 8 vouchers.
- ❖ The BREATHE Act **reauthorizes NAHASDA** to ensure American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians have access to safe, accessible, and affordable housing.
- ❖ The BREATHE Act **expands home ownership and addresses the effects of redlining**, specifically through a down payment assistance program that provides assistance with down payments and closing costs, specifically for communities that were historically redlined or subject to other forms of housing discrimination.

- ❖ The BREATHE Act **begins to address hyper vacancies in housing and expand community ownership** with a Housing Restoration Fund, a new pilot program that will use federal funds to help communities buy, transfer ownership of, and restore abandoned properties in selected localities.
- ❖ The BREATHE Act addresses housing discrimination by creating stand-alone **federal protections against housing discrimination** based on gender identity, sexual orientation, source of income, marital status, and veteran status.
- ❖ The Housing Justice Grant is a competitive grant that will **incentivize State and local governments to make housing equity-focused policy changes**, which include at the State level:
 - Ending housing discrimination against survivors and individuals who are formerly incarcerated, such as by codifying a housing “ban the box” policy for individuals who are formerly incarcerated; and



- Ensuring affordable housing for all and addressing gentrification, such as by rehousing displaced people and supporting the development of resident-run co-ops and Community Land Trusts.

And at the *local* and *regional* levels:

- Ensuring affordable housing for all, such as by ensuring safe, affordable housing for youth who have become too old for system-based care;
- Ensuring that all residents have access to economic opportunities, including by developing public transportation, bike routes, and street policies that more effectively link affordable housing options and economic opportunities; and
- Ending discriminatory zoning.

In turn, States and localities may use the funding for goals that include:

- Modernizing and expanding the stock of quality accessible and affordable housing;
- Supporting the development of Community Land Trusts; and
- Subsidizing broadband and Wi-Fi expansion in under-served communities.