SB 823
DISCOUNTED EV CHARGING PAYMENT CARD

THIS BILL
Through programs initiated by SB 350, California’s utilities incentivize clean car adoption by offering lower cost energy to customers with electric vehicles (EV). Unfortunately, these programs are inaccessible to the very communities which stand to gain the most from EV adoption: low-income households of color, many of whom are renters, live in multi-unit dwellings (MUD), or lack sufficient liquidity to install at-home charging equipment. These residents must rely on public charging infrastructure, where costs can be 2-3 times as much. SB 823 would address this inequity by allowing eligible residents to use a Discounted EV Charging Payment Card (Payment Card) provided by participating operators at publicly available EV chargers.

BACKGROUND
In 2022, the average gasoline price in California was $5.40 per gallon. At these prices, a typical family could save about $200 per month in fuel costs by driving an EV and charging at utilities’ lower EV rates, providing much needed, sustainable relief to Californians who shoulder an ever-increasing gasoline burden.

The communities who experience this economic burden the most are the same ones disproportionately impacted by poor air quality due to toxic air pollutants from tailpipe emissions. Across California, low-income communities of color tend to live in closer proximity to highways and busy roads, exposing them to these harmful pollutants at a higher rate: a clear environmental injustice. The environmental and economic benefits of switching to an EV are clear. But we need to ensure that the incentives for EV adoption are accessible to those who will benefit from them the most.

On one hand, Californians with at-home EV charging stations enjoy lower EV charging rates, thanks to utility incentive programs. Mostly residents of single-family homes, these drivers power their vehicles paying rates that are roughly equivalent to $2 per gallon of gas.

On the other hand, low-income MUD residents, renters, and families who can’t install at-home chargers are forced to rely on public charging infrastructure, with no access to these lower electricity rates. This disproportionately impacts low-income Black and Latine MUD residents who are significantly less likely to have access to charging infrastructure than their peers.

PURPOSE
In order to rectify this inequity, SB 823 calls for participating charging operator companies to develop a “Discounted EV Charging Payment Card” (Payment Card) program, which will allow eligible residents to use these stations and pay the lowest rates applicable.

When a program participant uses their Payment Card to charge their EV, they will pay either the tariff rate, or, the lowest electricity rate based on time of use, offered by the utility provider where the station is located. This will allow participants to pay the more beneficial, residential EV rate they would otherwise benefit from with an at-home charger. Additionally, those who are subscribed to income-driven discount programs (e.g. CARE, FERA) would also receive the appropriate discount on their charge.

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This solution is timely. California plans to direct $5.5 billion in state funding and $384 million in federal funding to go toward EV charging infrastructure and incentive programs, and 250,000 new EV chargers will come online by 2025. We must prepare now to ensure that low-income communities can fully benefit from this widespread build-out, especially since this infrastructure will be funded by public dollars.

Existing state incentives for at-home lower EV charging rates overwhelmingly benefit a small portion of state residents. We have a responsibility to make these programs accessible to all Californians – particularly at a time when the fuel burden is impacting so many, disproportionately so, low-income communities of color. SB 823 will help address this and expand access to the benefits of an existing, successful program.

Learn more and support our bill!

www.greencal.org
Let’s Green CA! is part of the nonprofit Romero Institute.

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