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Title: Designing Resident-Centric Programs: Lessons Learned on Low-Income Program Design and Implementation

Abstract: As California is moving towards shaping sustainability policies and programs, it is important to prioritize the needs and barriers of residents living in disadvantaged communities. In 2016, California Energy Commission (CEC) published the SB350 Low Income Barriers Study which highlighted the need to focus energy efficiency and renewables programs on low-income multifamily renters as a means to achieve equitable economic development. CEC's Clean Energy in Low-Income Multifamily Buildings Action Plan also discusses the opportunities and challenges of reaching low-income multifamily renters. Currently, 33% of households in California are classified as low-income and 47% of low-income Californians live in multifamily housing. This panel will provide an overview of resident-focused energy efficiency programs that are specifically tailored to address barriers faced by the low-income multifamily sector. The panel will share best practices and lessons learned that could support future program designs targeting this sector. Particularly, the panel will discuss the key components of the Low Income Weatherization Program (LIWP) and the new Solar on Affordable Multifamily Housing (SOMAH), programs that prioritize tenant benefits and protections. LIWP has been successful in providing comprehensive upgrades to the low-income multifamily sector by addressing key barriers including split incentives and tenant protection. It currently has a waitlist of over 180 properties. The program has been instrumental in decarbonizing buildings by combining electrification measures with solar installation, achieving higher savings and improving the health, and safety of residents. So far, the program funds have been entirely allocated to properties in census tracts that are designated as disadvantaged. The program has helped achieve an average residential utility bill savings of 30% and contributed to decreasing operating expenses at buildings serving low-income residents. The SOMAH program launches in June 2019 and is the country's largest low-income solar rebate program to directly benefit residents. The program is administered and designed by a third-party administrator which is working closely with community-based organizations to expand participation in disadvantaged communities. The SOMAH program principles are already being used to advocate for other energy efficiency and decarbonization programs. This panel will discuss the key takeaways for LIWP's success including program design, and implementation, provide an overview of the SOMAH program model and requirements, as well as highlight policy barriers. The role of benchmarking data in implementing these programs will also be covered. This panel discussion will benefit program implementers, policymakers, environmental justice advocates, and researchers working at the intersection of affordable housing and sustainability.