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HEATHER FERBERT
CITY ATTORNEY
CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Ibrahim Ahmed
(619) 666-4161
iaahmed@sandiego.gov

@HerbertFerberbCA | sandiego.com/ cityattorney

CITY OF SAN DIEGO FILES LAWSUIT CHALLENGING FEDERAL FUNDING FREEZE

Suit Seeks to Protect Grant Funds Already Committed to San Diego Urban Forestry

(SAN DIEGO – March 20, 2025) The City of San Diego filed a lawsuit to stop the Administration’s unlawful freeze on federal funding for critical programs. The City’s suit seeks to protect essential initiatives ranging from energy efficient affordable housing and air pollution monitoring to the expansion of urban forestry in the most underserved communities.

The complaint, filed today with nonprofit organizations and cities from across the country in the U.S. District Court for the District of South Carolina, Charleston Division, argues that these federal grants, awarded to implement key Congressional priorities, cannot be withheld by executive action. Further, the City argues that it has already spent or has contracted to spend millions of dollars on these crucial environmental protection programs only because the federal government agreed to pay back those expenditures. Many of the affected grants support projects that address health, environmental, agricultural, and climate challenges in communities disproportionately impacted by pollution and environmental harm.

These grant agreements allow cities and nonprofit organizations to operate vital programs, often filling gaps where federal and state resources fall short. Many are reimbursement based, which means cities and nonprofits perform work under the agreement terms and are reimbursed. The funding freeze has disrupted that process leaving them unable to move forward.

San Diego has already felt the impact. In 2024, the City was awarded \$10 million under the USDA’s Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program for a five-year project called “Ready, Set, Grow San Diego.” The grant supports planting and maintaining trees in local neighborhoods to improve the City’s urban forest, reduce extreme heat, increase stormwater absorption, reduce air pollution, and protect vulnerable communities.

Without access to these funds, the program, and the critical public health and climate resilience benefits it brings are at risk.

“This has a real local impact. Congress approved this funding to the City for trees in Bay Terraces, City Heights, Encanto, Linda Vista, Oak Park, Otay Mesa-Nestor, and Paradise Hills last year”, said City Attorney Heather Ferbert. **“Trees aren’t political - they shouldn’t be used in gamesmanship that hurts communities who have been promised environmental investments.”**

“The freeze on these already-committed federal funds puts critical community programs in jeopardy, impacting the health, safety, and quality of life for San Diegans,” continued City Attorney Ferbert. **“San Diego cannot afford to have these vital programs stalled indefinitely. This lawsuit is about holding the federal government accountable to the commitments it made to our City.”**

The lawsuit seeks injunctive relief to stop the federal government from continuing to block funding, restore affected programs, and compel the federal government to honor binding grant agreements.

The case is *The Sustainability Institute, Agarian Trust, Alliance for Agriculture, Alliance for the Shenandoah Valley, Bronx River Alliance, CleanAIRE NC, Conservation Innovation Fund, Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability, Marbleseed, Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture, and Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA, and Baltimore, Maryland; Columbus, Ohio; Madison, Wisconsin; Nashville, Tennessee; New Haven, Connecticut; San Diego, California v. Donald J. Trump, et. al.*, was filed in the United States District Court for the District of South Carolina, Charleston Division.

The full complaint is attached.

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SAN DIEGO CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
1200 THIRD AVENUE, 1620, SAN DIEGO, CA 92101
(619) 236-6220

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