

California Agricultural Land Equity Task Force Virtual AB 524 Subcommittee Meeting Summary: April 18, 2025

Meeting Called to Order

Facilitator Wylie started the meeting at 3:02 p.m.

Welcome and Housekeeping

Facilitator Wylie provided housekeeping information for all meeting participants. Slides and materials presented during the meeting are available on the California Strategic Growth Council ([SGC website](#)).

Roll Call

Roll call was conducted by the facilitator. Members present:

- Irene de Barraicua
- Nathaniel Brown
- Lawrence Harlan
- James Nakahara
- Doria Robinson
- Liya Schwartzman
- Qi Zhou (joined at 3:29 pm)

Members absent:

- None

Quorum was established.

Staff present:

- Sean Kennedy, SGC
- Camille Frazier, SGC
- Tessa Salzman, SGC
- Meagan Wylie, Sacramento State

Assembly Bill (AB) 524 Discussion

Guest presenter Jamie Fanous, Policy and Organizing Director with Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF), provided an overview of AB 524 (Wilson), which would establish California's first state-level land equity and access program. Key points include:

- The program would allocate \$30 million from the 2024 Climate Bond to support land acquisition and long-term leases or transfers to beginning and underserved farmers and Tribal communities.
- It would include technical assistance (TA) and infrastructure funding (up to 15% of total funds), and reserve 33% of financial assistance for Tribal governments and entities.
- The Task Force was referenced in the bond language to serve in a consultation capacity.
- Committee hearings for this bill begin April 30, 2025. Deadline for comments is April 23.
- If passed, the program would be implemented starting January 2026.

Subcommittee members then engaged in discussion about the proposed bill. Highlights include:

- Members discussed the potential for a companion bill to address infrastructure and the need for program design that enables quick action to secure land.
- Jamie raised the idea of the Task Force, or a subcomponent thereof, continuing past 2026 to provide program oversight for AB 524, assuming it passes.
 - General support was expressed for AB 524, with interest to add language that describes an ongoing role for the Task Force during program implementation.
- Members identified AB 524 as part of a broader set of land access strategies, including the Sustainable Agricultural Lands Conservation Program (SALC) and potential revolving loan funds.
- Members raised some concerns regarding terminology used in the bill. The bill uses “lease to own,” which several members felt may be misleading or exploitable. Preference was voiced for “option to purchase” language, as used in CAFF’s overview presentation.
- Members emphasized that the bill lacks explicit mechanisms to ensure affordability or transition land to working farmers. There was interest in recommending language to address these gaps.

Public Comment:

None.

Working Session

Members considered how the Task Force should engage with the legislation and agreed on the following actions:

- Submit a general support letter from the Subcommittee ahead of the April 23 deadline for the April 30 hearing.
- Explore a more detailed, strategic letter from the full Task Force at its May 14-15, 2025 meeting.

Members next outlined the components of a support letter:

- Introduce the Task Force and express appreciation to CAFF and Assemblymember Wilson.
- Affirm that AB 524 reflects tangible progress aligned with Task Force recommendations.
- Express openness to ongoing collaboration and oversight roles post-2026.
- Acknowledge synergies with Task Force recommendations and areas for future refinement.

Member James Nakahara will work with staff to draft, finalize, and submit the letter on behalf of the Subcommittee by April 23. The letter will list all Subcommittee members.

Facilitator Wylie summarized action items and next steps and highlighted upcoming meetings.

Public Comment:

None.

General Public Comment:

None.

The meeting adjourned at 5:06 p.m.