

July 28, 2021

Assembly Member Lorena Gonzalez, Chair
Assembly Appropriations Committee
State Capitol, Room 2114
Sacramento, California 95814

RE: SB 796 Bruce's Beach – SUPPORT

Dear Chair Gonzalez,

The below signed organizations, including; Surfrider Foundation, California Coastal Protection Network, Los Angeles Waterkeeper, Color the Water, Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy, Active San Gabriel Valley and INTRSXN write to respectfully register our strong support for SB 796 (Bradford). This important bill would provide a clear path to right one of the wrongs that haunt California's past, acts of racism that drove people of color from equitable ownership and enjoyment of our state's beloved coastline.

Willa and Charles Bruce, a Black couple, opened Bruce's Lodge, a popular resort catering to Black families, in the 1920s in Manhattan Beach, California. Despite ongoing acts of racist violence and harassment from the KKK and White supremacists, the Bruces continued to operate the resort as a safe haven from segregation and Jim Crow but were forced off their property by the City of Manhattan Beach by use of eminent domain. Although the land was ostensibly seized by local government for the creation of a public park, it sat empty for decades before it was ultimately transferred to the State in 1948 and later to Los Angeles County in 1995.

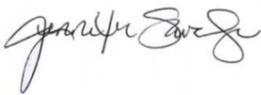
Los Angeles County is currently exploring how to convey the land back to descendants of Willa and Charles Bruce, in direct conversation with their family. SB 796 would officially authorize the transfer of the land now known as Bruce's Beach in Manhattan Beach, ensure the Bruce family does not face any income tax liability upon receiving the land, and remove existing restrictions that the land must be used solely for public recreation.

Access for all to California's coast and beaches, while guaranteed in our state constitution, remains deeply inequitable as barriers persist in keeping beaches out of reach for many Black communities and other historically marginalized communities. Transportation and physical accessibility [remain challenging](#) for many, and a shortage of affordable overnight coastal accommodations strains visitors with limited resources. And even when they do get to the beach, Black families report that they don't always [feel safe or welcome](#).

The passage of SB 796 and the return of Bruce's Beach to its rightful owners won't erase the century of harm done to the Bruce family and the families that once enjoyed their own community by the beach. However, it will send a powerful message about California's commitment to justice and equitable access to the coast and the great outdoors, and provide a model for addressing similar harms done in other communities across California and nationwide.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Savage
California Policy Manager
Surfrider Foundation



David Diaz, MPH
Executive Director
ActiveSGV



Susan Jordan
Executive Director
California Coastal Protection Network



Lizelle Jackson
Co-founder
Color the Water



Bruce Reznik
Executive Director
Los Angeles Waterkeeper



Jessa Williams
Founder
INTRSXTN



James Elmendorf
Policy Director
Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy

Cc:

Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon
Senate President Pro Tem Toni Atkins
Senator Steven Bradford