



August 6, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Thune
Majority Whip
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Steve Scalise
Minority Whip
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader McCarthy, Majority Whip Thune, and Minority Whip Scalise:

The economic and public health damage from the global pandemic has been staggering; from the expiration of expanded unemployment benefits to continued evictions and the danger frontline workers undertake to the health of themselves and their loved ones every day, the impacts have been widespread. As lawmakers move to address this crisis, you have a chance to make a real difference by providing direct assistance to people, creating good-paying healthy jobs, and beginning to address inequities that have resulted in devastating health outcomes for people of color, including Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities. Such a package would put people ahead of corporate interests.

Unfortunately, the Senate Majority package released on July 27 does not come close to providing what struggling families and communities need.

As the package moves forward we urge you to prioritize and include funding for a number of existing programs, many of which have enjoyed bipartisan support, that are proven to provide the kind of jobs, environmental and equity outcomes we need now more than ever. These are programs that invest in American clean energy to create jobs and reduce pollution, that address disparities in our communities beginning with the air we breathe and the water that we drink, and that employ a diverse workforce to make communities more resilient so that people and nature can better withstand the impacts of the pandemic, climate change and other shocks.

Below are just some of the existing programs that with additional funding could support clean energy and healthy communities, many of which have already been supported in bills passed by the House of Representatives:

Clean energy incentives: Investment in clean energy will help reduce the pollution impact on frontline communities that led to severe health impacts before the crisis, and [higher mortality rates](#) during the pandemic. Congress should support clean energy tax incentives in the form of a multiyear delay to the scheduled phase down or phase out of existing incentives for solar, wind, and energy efficiency,

providing direct payments and refundability of existing tax credits, expanding the investment tax credit eligibility to stand-alone energy storage projects and offshore wind, and lifting the cap on the tax credit for electric vehicles.

Building efficiency: During the pandemic and beyond, we need to improve building efficiency to lower utility bills for families and small businesses, while we reduce pollution and ensure that everyone has access to adequate heating and cooling. Specifically, Congress should provide \$7 billion in additional assistance to the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and \$2 billion to the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund (CDFI), \$800 million of which is for minority-owned lenders.

Clean transportation: Transportation investments and policy solutions must work towards reducing pollution and providing affordable and accessible transit and active mobility options for our communities. These solutions should provide greater mobility options for transit, move toward transportation electrification for people and goods, and be based on resilient infrastructure. Specifically, Congress should provide \$36 billion in relief funds for public transit and \$500 million in annual funding for the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA).

Building resilient communities: It is time to invest in building more resilient communities, particularly frontline, vulnerable, Indigenous and communities of color that have been disproportionately affected by pollution for too long. Specifically, we support the additional investment of \$30.36 billion in the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) and \$6 billion in the Environmental Protection Agency's Environmental Justice Grant Program in addition to increasing the grant size to \$500,000.

Clean and safe water: We need immediate action to ensure all individuals and families have access to clean water. Specifically, we urge Congress to enact protections to prevent residential water shutoffs and mandate safe reconnections of households previously disconnected. Congress should also provide at least \$3 billion in immediate funding for a Low-Income Households Drinking Water and Wastewater Assistance Program to ensure households stay connected to essential water and sanitation services, and to support community water systems challenged by revenue loss. We must also consider significant, long-term investments in our water treatment, delivery, access and conservation systems across the country to eliminate water inequities, spur economic recovery and growth, and build strong, resilient communities.

Land, water and wildlife restoration: Land and water conservation and restoration efforts will address the climate and biodiversity crises, which are directly tied to the health of communities. Investing in nature and protecting America's lands and waters will ease the pollution burden on communities and get people back to work through related infrastructure projects. Thousands of orphaned onshore oil and gas wells present significant environmental and public health risks on federal, state, private and tribal lands. Congress should provide \$4 billion to create jobs plugging and reclaiming these wells which will reduce pollutants entering waterways and methane leaks, in addition to updating bonding requirements

Finally, no package should include giveaways to fossil fuel corporations. Any relief for the industry should be allocated to workers and communities affected by the downturn. We must also protect these workers and communities as we transition to cleaner forms of energy.

We do not have to choose between a healthy environment and a vibrant recovery. In these difficult times we need the Senate to provide bold leadership that helps the country heal from this devastating pandemic in a way that creates long-term, healthy jobs, cuts harmful pollution, and promotes an equitable and just future for all.

Thank you.

Alaska Legacy Project
Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments
Black Millennials for Flint
Business Forward
Center for American Progress
Clean Water Action
Defend Our Future
Defenders of Wildlife
Earth Day Network
Earthjustice
Elected Officials to Protect America
Environmental Defense Fund
Evangelical Environmental Network
Generation Progress
Green the Church
Healthy Environment Alliance of Utah
Hispanic Access Foundation
Interfaith Power and Light
Iowa Farmers Union
League of Conservation Voters
Mi Familia Vota
Moms Clean Air Force
Mormon Environmental Stewardship Alliance
National Medical Association
National Parks Conservation Association
National Wildlife Federation
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Poder Latinx
Public Citizen
Sierra Club
Surfrider Foundation
The CLEO Institute
The Climate Reality Project
The Wilderness Society
Union of Concerned Scientists

CC: The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Chuck Schumer, Minority Leader, U.S. Senate

The Honorable Richard Shelby, Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable John Barrasso, Chair, Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski, Chair, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources,
Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and Related
Agencies

The Honorable Chuck Grassley, Chair, Senate Committee on Finance

The Honorable Lamar Alexander, Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on
Energy and Water Development

The Honorable Susan Collins, Chair, Senate Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on
Transportation, Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies

The Honorable Kevin Brady, Ranking Member, House Committee on Ways and Means

The Honorable Kay Granger, Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Greg Walden, Ranking Member, House Committee on Energy and Commerce

The Honorable Rob Bishop, Ranking Member, House Committee on Natural Resources

The Honorable Sam Graves, Ranking Member, House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

The Honorable Garret Graves, Ranking Member, House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis

The Honorable Adrian Smith, Ranking Member, House Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Select Revenue Measures

The Honorable Mike Simpson, Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies

The Honorable Dave Joyce, Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart, Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and Urban Development and Related Agencies

The Honorable Fred Upton, Ranking Member, House Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Energy

The Honorable John Shimkus, Ranking Member, House Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change

The Honorable Paul Gosar, Ranking Member, House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources

The Honorable Don Young, Ranking Member, House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Parks, Forests and Public Lands

The Honorable Tom McClintock, Ranking Member, House Committee on Natural Resources
Subcommittee on Water, Oceans and Wildlife

The Honorable Rodney Davis, Ranking Member, House Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure Subcommittee on Highways and Transit

The Honorable Bruce Westerman, Ranking Member, House Committee on Transportation and
Infrastructure Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment