

March 31, 2020

Dear Member of Congress,

As you consider legislation to address the growing public health and economic crises caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the principles of justice and equity must be centered. Environmental justice communities, Tribal communities, low-income communities and communities of color are hit hardest by economic downturns and must be prioritized. Members of these communities are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 because they are often exposed to disproportionately high levels of pollution and have underlying health conditions, such as asthma, diabetes and cancer.

Legislation must also ensure that the pathway for economic recovery works for everyone and that the benefits of a stimulus package are distributed equitably and justly. In addition, stimulus legislation must include safeguards to ensure that stimulus dollars are spent in ways that comply with environmental regulations to avoid increasing public health and safety risks. Projects supported by stimulus legislation should reduce locally harmful air pollution in communities coping with the cumulative impacts of multiple pollution sources. Companies receiving stimulus support with facilities located in or near low-income neighborhoods, tribal communities and communities must significantly reduce locally harmful pollution, such as airborne particulate matter, in these communities.

To safeguard environmental justice communities, Tribal communities, low-income communities, and communities of color, we urge you to include in economic stimulus legislation the spending priorities recommended below.

WATER

Access to affordable clean water is critical, especially as households nationwide respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. We recommend the following specific actions and funding:

Immediately implement a national moratorium on water shutoffs for all households and fund \$100 million for the immediate restoration of all residential water services.

Include \$25 million for immediate potable water distribution, filter installation and sanitation systems for homes without access to these necessities. Spending should prioritize urban, rural, and Tribal communities who currently lack access to safe drinking water and adequate water and sanitation systems.

Include \$45 million in grants and technical assistance dollars for the replacement of both household plumbing and lead services lines. Spending should prioritize households' whose plumbing systems have been corroded by municipal drinking water systems, such as in Flint, Michigan. This should also allow for home water filters for contaminants including but not limited to lead and PFAS. Trust in municipal water systems must be rebuilt.

Include \$150 million to establish three Community Water and Energy Resource Centers (CWERCs) in

Michigan. CWERCs will resolve many ratepayer, infrastructure, and environmental issues to improve Michigan's essential freshwater resources through a decentralized approach to water treatment and infrastructure.

Fund \$30 billion for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund and the Clean Water State Revolving Fund. These funds support investments in infrastructure and programs that are essential to providing safe and affordable drinking water to communities, protecting water systems, managing waste- and stormwater, building climate resilience and expanding economic opportunities for low-income communities and communities of color. The American Society of Civil Engineers gave U.S. drinking water and wastewater infrastructure "D" and "D+" grades, respectively, and estimates that the investment gap for these critical systems will reach \$105 billion by 2025.

ENERGY

Households must have access to affordable, reliable and sustainable electricity to ensure public health and safety and to support an inclusive, just and pollution-free energy economy with high-quality jobs. We recommend funding for the following programs:

\$3.2 billion for the Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) Program. According to DOE's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, "Through the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Recovery Act), the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE's) Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grant (EECBG) Program provided \$3.2 billion in block grants to cities, communities, states, U.S. territories, and Indian tribes to develop, promote, implement, and manage energy efficiency and conservation projects that ultimately created jobs." Economic stimulus legislation should provide \$3.2 billion to the EECBG program. The EECBG program should prioritize spending in communities left behind by past and ongoing energy efficiency programs.

\$7 billion for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. LIHEAP assists families with energy costs related to energy bills and weatherization and energy-related home minor repairs. Stimulus legislation should include \$7 billion for LIHEAP.

\$7 billion for the Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP). WAP provides weatherization for low-income households, leading to \$238 or more in average savings on energy costs. WAP lowers energy bills for mid- and low-income families by supporting home energy efficiency improvements and supports clean energy jobs. Every year the requests for WAP support far exceed the funds available, leaving many households without the support they need to improve their energy efficiency and reduce energy costs. Congress should include \$7 billion for WAP in stimulus legislation and strengthen the program to better reach and serve low-income families.

POLLUTION FREE TRANSPORTATION AND GOODS MOVEMENT

Existing federal programs, with adequate funding, can substantially reduce air pollution from transportation and goods movement. These programs provide critical funds to shift fleets and equipment from diesel to zero emissions, while improving air quality and public health. We recommend that Congress supporting the following programs:

\$500 million annually for Federal Transit Administration's Low or No Emissions Vehicle Program.

Prioritize program spending in communities confronted with the cumulative impacts of disproportionately high levels of pollution.

\$500 million annually for the Diesel Emissions Reductions Act (DERA). Prioritize zero emissions replacement equipment and prioritize spending in communities confronted with the cumulative impacts of disproportionately high levels of pollution.

SAFE, HEALTHY AND POLLUTION-FREE COMMUNITIES

To build safe and healthy communities and infrastructure, we recommend that Congress fund the following programs:

\$100 million for the National Institute of Environmental Health Science (NIEHS) Environmental Career Worker Training. The NIEHS Environmental Career Worker Training Program (ECWTP) provides job and safety training for disadvantaged and underrepresented members of communities of color and low-income communities to secure jobs in environmental restoration, construction, handling hazardous materials and waste, and emergency response. A 2015 report assessing the program found that “an annual federal investment of \$3.5 million in the ECWTP generates a \$100 million return.” The report found that the program increases the earning potential of those trained, increases tax revenue, lowers workplace injury and hiring costs, and reduces crime..

\$6 billion for the EPA Environmental Justice Small Grants (EJSG) Program. This program provides small grants to communities to address environmental risks associated with high concentrations of pollution, to prepare for climate change effects, and to improve public health. In 2019, the EJSG program provided roughly \$1.5 million for one-year grants of up to \$30,000 each. Given the disproportionate exposure to high levels of pollution, climate change effects and other impacts of historic economic and racial inequality, these grants provide critical resources to low-income communities, tribal communities and communities of color to improve community health and support job creation. Congress should increase the annual funding for the EJSG program to \$6 billion, increase the grant size to up to \$500,000, and increase the grant period from one to two years.

\$20 billion for Superfund Site Cleanup to protect communities from toxic pollution. Hurricanes Harvey, Florence, and Maria spotlighted the elevated public health and safety risks that Superfund sites pose to communities. Superfund cleanup spending is crucial to protect the 53 million people living within three miles of the existing 1,836 Superfund sites. Stimulus legislation should increase Superfund site cleanup funding to \$20 billion.

\$560 million for EPA to enforce environmental regulations. Industrial facilities and other companies must continue to comply with environmental regulations to avoid increasing public health and safety risks at a time when public health is already threatened by the corona virus pandemic. To protect public health and safety and hold companies accountable when they violate environmental regulations, Congress

should provide \$560 million for EPA to ensure compliance and enforcement with environmental regulations.

\$30 billion for Community Development Block Grants (CDBG). The CDBG program provides grants to states to support community development and address economic and public health challenges created by historic racial and economic inequality. CDBG grants support construction of affordable housing, programs to create economic opportunities and jobs, services for those in need, job creation, and improvement of community living conditions and quality of life. In light of current public health and safety risks, Congress should provide \$30 billion for CDBG to support equitable and just community development and access to safe, affordable, resilient and energy efficient housing.

\$2 billion for Brownfields Redevelopment. EPA's Brownfields Program supports economic redevelopment by helping states and communities safely clean up and sustainably reuse former industrial and contaminated sites. Congress should increase the FY 2019 annual appropriation of \$250 million for EPA's Brownfields redevelopment program to \$2 billion to support economic development and sustainable approaches to local land use. This program should be implemented through community-driven planning that protects against community displacement.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Environmental regulation does not necessarily mean healthy environments for all communities. Many communities suffer from the cumulative effects of multiple pollution sources. Stimulus legislation must not abandon or diminish the important goal of reducing toxic pollution in all its forms. The stimulus is an important opportunity for an innovative and comprehensive approach to reducing legacy environmental and economic impacts on communities and be designed intentionally to ensure that it does not impose further risks. Therefore all the items noted above, should integrate criteria and mechanisms for prioritizing those communities that are the most vulnerable economically and environmentally.

Thank you for your consideration of these policies and programs.

Sincerely,

350 New Orleans
Alaska Community Action on Toxics
Alaska Wilderness Action
Alliance For Sustainability
AZIPL
Beyond Toxics
Black Visions
Breast Cancer Prevention Partners
Catalyst Miami
Center for American Progress
Center For Earth Energy and Democracy
Center for Environmental Health
Center for Progressive Reform

Center for Sustainable Communities
Centro de Trabajadores Unidos en Lucha
Chicago Area Peace Action
Chispa Arizona
City of Minneapolis
Clean Power Lake County
Climate Generation
Climate Resilience Consulting
ClimateMama
Coming Clean
Communities Organizing Latinx Power and Action
Community Housing & Empowerment Connections Inc
Community Members for Environmental Justice
Community Power
Concerned Citizens of Wagon Mound and Mora County
Cooperative Energy Futures
Corazón Latino
Courage California
Dakota Resource Council
Delaware Concerned Residents for EJ
Delaware Environmental Justice Community Partnership:
Earthjustice
Earthworks
Ecology Center
EcoWorks
Empower Michigan
Environmental & Public Health Consulting
Epidemic Answers
Farmworker Association of Florida
Friends of the Earth
Garfield Foundation
Greater Frenchtown Revitalization Council, Inc.
Green America
Greenpeace USA
GreenRoots, Inc
Harambee House, Inc.
Healthy Building Network
Healthy Schools Network
Hip Hop Caucus
Hondo Empowerment Committee
Interfaith Power & Light
International Student Environmental Coalition
Investor Advocates for Social Justice
Jesus People Against Pollution
Just Transition Alliance
Kadima

Kinetic Communities Consulting
Lakefront DSA
Lara Jones Consulting
League of Conservation Voters
Learning Disabilities Association of Oklahoma
Los Jardines Institute
Midwest Environmental Advocates
Midwest Environmental Justice Network
Moms Clean Air Force
Mossville Environmental Action Now
National Toxic Encephalopathy Foundation
Natural Resources Defense Council
New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance
Nexus Community Partners
Nontoxic Certified
North American Climate, Conservation and Environment
North Dakota Native Vote
Nuclear Information and Resource Service
Partnership for Policy Integrity
People for Community Recovery
Pesticide Action Network
Physicians for Social Responsibility
Rachel Carson Council
ReGenesis Community Development Corporation
Revitalization Strategies
Rooted WI, Inc. (formerly Center for Resilient Cities)
Safer States
SBMTNA
Sierra Club
Soulardarity
Tallahassee Food Network, Inc.
Tewa Women United
The Wilderness Society
Tishman Environment & Design Center
Toxic Free NC
Union of Concerned Scientists
Vecinos del Bosque
WE ACT for Environmental Justice
We the People of Detroit
West End Revitalization Association WERA
Wilmington City Council
Women's Voices for the Earth