House of Representatives
# SUSTAINABLE ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT COALITION

June 18, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce

The Honorable Peter A. DeFazio
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

The Honorable Richard Neal
Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means

The Honorable Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Chairman
Committee on Education and Labor

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson
Chairwoman
Committee on Science, Space & Technology

The Honorable Raúl M. Grijalva
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources

The Honorable Collin Peterson
Chairman
Committee on Agriculture

The Honorable Kathy Castor
Chairwoman
Select Committee on the Climate Crisis

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader Hoyer, and Committee Chairs:

Thank you for your leadership in response to the COVID-19 health crisis and subsequent economic fallout. As leaders of the nearly 70-member House Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition (SEEC), we write to advocate for important sustainability polices in ongoing relief and recovery legislation. As our work in Congress evolves, we must continue to address the immediate needs of individuals, workers, and communities across the country, especially those most in need. Any subsequent legislative package must continue to protect people and public health, and we urge you to prioritize opportunities that can also move our country towards a cleaner, healthier, and more just nation as we aim for recovery.

Communities in every Congressional District were already experiencing the effects of climate change before the start of this pandemic, and now we must simultaneously face both crises as we work to develop relief and broad economic recovery packages. As leaders, it is our responsibility to protect communities from COVID-19, especially low-income communities, communities of color, and Tribal and indigenous communities impacted disproportionately by the virus; support working Americans; and make sure we are making plans to build back better, more sustainably and more equitably—all at the same time. Relief and recovery legislation will shape our society for years to come. We must use these bills to build in a climate-smart way with the future in mind**.**

In the near-term, as we continue critical work on relief packages, we would like to urgently bring your attention to more than half-a-million workers in one sector that has so far been largely neglected in relief policies: the clean energy sector. This sector employs 3.4 million people in our country, and 620,000 have lost their jobs in just the past few months. While the Trump Administration has ensured federal taxpayer support for other energy sectors, such as oil and gas, the Administration abruptly applied retroactive rent fees for solar and wind projects on federal lands, suddenly increasing costs for a sector already hammered by the COVID-19 economic crisis.

While we welcomed a recent change in the Administration's posture when the Internal Revenue Service announced it will provide a safe harbor extension for projects that commenced construction in 2016 or 2017, there is still more time-sensitive work to be done. Direct support for the clean energy sector has, to this point, been left out of congressional relief packages, and broad programs such as the Paycheck Protection Program have not been able to address the COVID-specific challenges facing clean energy companies—it's hard to keep workers on payroll even with federal support when the projects employees would return to are collapsing.

*To support clean energy workers in current relief efforts, we urge you to: extend the ITC credit rate of 26% for one additional year, provide temporary refundability for ITC and PTC projects, strengthen and extend energy efficiency tax incentives and, provide grants to support energy efficiency retrofitting at currently closed schools and other essential buildings.*

In both the immediate and the longer-term, we must plan for a sustainable economic recovery and look to protect the long-term health and well-being of our communities. We urge you to consider the following high-level principles to guide investments:

1. Focus federal funding on smart and strategic investments that will put Americans back to work as quickly as possible while helping us to build back more sustainably. These investments should help create quality, family-sustaining jobs, especially in labor intensive sectors like construction and manufacturing, while also reducing pollution, improving efficiency and resilience, deploying clean energy, protecting our communities from climate change, and enhancing U.S. competitiveness and innovation by strengthening domestic advanced manufacturing and associated supply chains.
2. Support American workers by ensuring all projects built with federal funding are subject to domestic content and prevailing wage requirements. Our policies should also support utilization of project labor agreements, community benefit agreements, local hire and other pro-worker and pro-community practices.
3. Promote equity and environmental justice by supporting programs that ensure equal access to clean water, clean air, and shared prosperity. Environmental protections and

spending on environmental programs do not always translate to healthy environments for all communities. Federal investments should promote an economic and environmental recovery for all neighborhoods and create new opportunities for people that have too often lacked access to training and employment in the clean energy economy. In particular, as part of our nation-wide effort to dismantle systemic racism, we must take this opportunity to ensure our recovery investments help put an end to environmental and other forms of racism that plague communities of color.

We urge you to utilize programs and authorities to their fullest to jumpstart our economy. When necessary Congress should legislate modest adjustments to existing programs to ensure federal funds are spent as effectively as possible. In certain circumstances, outlined in this letter, we urge you to consider establishing new programs to fill unmet needs that have high potential to create jobs, build sustainable infrastructure, and enhance U.S. competitiveness in the future. We further urge you to waive non-Federal cost share requirements when appropriate.

With the above principles in mind, we recommend that you prioritize investments in the areas outlined in the attached policy brief as we develop a blueprint for an economic recovery. The list provided is extensive, but not comprehensive—demonstrating the many policy options available to drive a strong and sustainable recovery.

Our efforts to protect families, workers, and communities must protect them now and for decades to come. We stand ready to work with you on essential economic recovery legislation that confronts immediate economic and public health crises while building a more just and inclusive American clean energy economy for shared, sustainable prosperity in the 21st century.

Sincerely,

Rep. Chellie Pingree
SEEC Vice-Chair

Rep. Paul Tonko
SEEC Co-Chair

Rep. Doris Matsui
SEEC Co-Chair

Rep. Gerald E. Connolly
SEEC Co-Chair

Rep. A. Donald McEachin

SEEC Vice-Chair

Rep. Alan S. Lowenthal

SEEC Vice-Chair

Rep. Matt Cartwright

SEEC Vice-Chair

Rep. Mike Quigley

SEEC Vice-Chair

Policy Pathways for a Sustainable Recovery

## I. Energy Efficiency

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, energy efficiency employed nearly 2.3 million of the more than 3 million Americans working in clean energy. Seven in ten of those jobs were in construction and manufacturing. In addition to providing labor-intensive jobs, according to a 2019 report by ACEEE, energy efficiency can reduce U.S. energy use and greenhouse gas emissions by half by 2050. A federal recovery package should include significant investments in residential, commercial, and industrial energy efficiency that will expand on the millions of existing efficiency jobs while reducing pollution and lowering energy costs for consumers and businesses.

The **Weatherization Assistance Program** is the nation's largest residential efficiency program. In addition to creating local jobs, significant funding for weatherization will result in energy savings and health benefits for low-income households. In addition to substantial funding, modest reforms to the program, including increasing funding that can be used for administrative expenses, updating the re-weatherization eligibility date, and raising the average cost per unit and cap on renewable energy systems, and increasing investment in building electrification and health and safety improvements, will all ensure that the program's grantees can implement a significant increase in funding effectively. The **State Energy Efficiency Appliance Rebate Program** (Section 124 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005) could provide immediate incentives to homeowners looking to upgrade to ENERGY STAR appliances. Congress should also provide funding for **public facilities retrofits** through existing authorities (Sec. 125 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005) and leverage private investment by encouraging greater use of **Energy Savings Performance Contracts** for federal facilities. We could also catalyze substantial new investment in construction jobs upgrading the energy performance and health of residential housing by providing rebates to homeowners who invest in energy efficiency improvements.[1]

The COVID-19 pandemic is demonstrating the importance of many critical facilities, including hospitals, community health centers, and nursing homes. Along with ports, airports, schools, and universities, these buildings should be the focus of modernization efforts, which should seek to improve energy efficiency, telecommunications capabilities, and resilience.[2] These facilities can greatly improve resilience through integration of on-site electricity generation and energy storage systems, microgrids, and other technologies. Funding for such work can be delivered through the **State Energy Program** (see Section II State & Local Programs). Additionally, to support cost-saving efficiency improvements for small business owners, we encourage you to provide matching funds for existing utility demand-side management programs aimed at small business efficiency improvements.

Finally, the Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition (SEEC) continues to support **tax credits that will incentivize energy efficiency**. We encourage an extension of the **179D deduction for energy efficient commercial and multifamily buildings**. We also encourage extensions and updates for the **25C incentive for homeowner efficiency improvements** and **Section 45L incentive for energy efficient new homes** that reflect new

[1] As an example, see H.R. 2043, the Home Owner Managing Energy Savings (HOMES) Act

[2] As an example, see H.R. 865, the Rebuild America's Schools Act

technologies and changed market conditions. Extending and modifying energy efficiency tax credits will support job creations while also helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, save customers and businesses money, and improve public health by reducing dangerous air pollution.

## II. State & Local Programs

In the absence of federal leadership, state and local governments have been leading our nation's transition to a clean energy economy; however, during a time of potentially tightening state and local budgets, it is now more important than ever that federal funding allows this essential work to continue. Congress should look to programs that provide flexibility to state, local, tribal and territorial governments to address their unique needs and priorities.

**Energy Efficiency and Conservation Block Grants** (Sec. 542 of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007) would support local governments' assessment and implementation of projects that promote efficiency and clean energy. In addition to creating local jobs, many of these projects have rapid returns on investment, which will ultimately reduce local governments' operating expenses and improve long-term budget outlooks. In the past, the **State Energy Program** was successfully utilized for rapid economic recovery programs and projects aimed at creating energy-related jobs. In addition to providing funding, Congress should consider directing money for specific purposes where states have already taken the leading role, including critical facility retrofits, building code adoption and enforcement, and zero-emission vehicle infrastructure deployment.

Congress should support robust funding for many of EPA's **State and Tribal Assistance Grants**. These programs support **air pollution control** (Sec. 105 of the Clean Air Act), **water pollution control** (Sec. 106 of the Clean Water Act), **public water system supervision** (Secs. 1443(a) and 1451(a)(3) of the Safe Drinking Water Act), and many other important environmental and public health priorities. Significant new funds should also be made available to states and communities through the HUD **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)** programs for **Disaster Recovery and Mitigation**, to expand investment in infrastructure hardening, community resilience, environmental justice and deployment of clean efficient, and renewable technology.

## III. Clean Electricity Generation

In recent years, there has been an incredible growth in deployment of clean energy resources. Solar installer and wind technician have been among the fastest growing jobs in the country for the past several years. Unfortunately, clean energy sectors are already experiencing significant layoffs and furloughs due to COVID-19. Supply chain and tax equity financing challenges pose major barriers to resuming the job creation potential in these sectors.

SEEC's leadership has previously sought **a long-term extension of the Investment Tax Credit (ITC) and Production Tax Credit (PTC) for all eligible technologies,** among other clean energy tax priorities, including providing greater long-term certainty for emerging technologies such as offshore wind. We recommend a five-year extension for both credits. We continue to

believe this would be a significant driver of economic activity and private sector investment, but we also recognize there are other important measures that Congress should consider in order to promote a sustainable recovery. Given the lack of tax equity liability during this economic downturn, Congress should provide project developers with **temporary refundability for up to three years in order to monetize the ITC and PTC in the face of an impaired tax equity market**.[3] Additionally, given the worker, supply chain, and financing disruptions, Congress **should extend commence construction and safe harbor provisions** by at least three additional years for offshore wind projects in order to take advantage of existing tax incentive opportunities. Congress should also reauthorize and fund **hydroelectric production and efficiency improvement incentives** (Sec. 242 and Sec. 243 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005), and make funding available for dam safety, inspections, repairs and when appropriate, decommissioning.

To ensure clean energy investments reach all communities, Congress should support opportunities for **solar energy deployment in low-income neighborhoods** through targeted grants for community and rooftop solar projects.[4] Congress can also ensure rural communities experience the financial and pollution reduction benefits of clean energy by providing additional funding for USDA's **Rural Energy for America Program**. Funding for DOE's **Office of Indian Energy Policy and Programs** would assist American Indian Tribes and Alaska Native villages with energy development, cost reduction, and electrification of Indian lands and homes.

Continuing to provide funding for DOE's Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy with a focus on reducing 'soft' costs can support **expedited permitting and installation of distributed energy resources.** This may be accomplished by establishing a voluntary model permit that could be adopted by local permitting authorities.

Congress should also support responsible development of wind, solar, and geothermal projects on public lands and waters by **increasing funding for Bureau of Ocean Energy Management and Bureau of Land Management renewable energy permitting staff**. Increasing funding for staff ensures that permits are processed in a timely manner and with the highest environmental standards. Importantly, these investments will also help promote economic development in rural communities.[5]

## IV. Electric Grid Infrastructure

Major investments in our nation's energy infrastructure are necessary to transition successfully to a clean, reliable, resilient, and affordable power system. Upgrades are needed to integrate growing but variable renewable energy resources, support electrification in transportation and other sectors, and enhance the efficiency and resilience of this essential infrastructure. These investments can put Americans to work while creating a pathway for the power sector to achieve ambitious clean energy goals.

Congress should provide **grant opportunities to support grid modernization** in order to improve the resilience, performance, cybersecurity, and efficiency of the electric grid. Congress

[3] As an example, see H.R. 5157, the Renewable Energy Investment Act
[4] As an example, see H.R. 4291, the Low-Income Solar Energy Act
[5] As an example, see H.R. 3794, the Public Land Renewable Energy Development Act

should make funding available through DOE's **Smart Grid Investment Grant Program** (Sec. 1306 of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007). Deployment of advanced metering infrastructure, sensors, and other smart technologies will further enable demand response and load shifting programs, data management systems, and methods of improving visibility of distributed energy resources on the grid. Additional DOE grant and demonstration investments should **support deployment of energy storage systems and microgrids** to further improve the performance and resilience of the grid. The SEEC's leadership continues to support **expanding eligibility under the Investment Tax Credit for standalone energy storage systems.**

While distributed energy resources are critical to putting Americans back to work and to building a clean energy economy, Congress should also consider how transmission infrastructure can unlock geographically constrained renewable projects located far away from centers of electricity demand. Long-distance and interregional transmission projects have proven difficult to complete due to regulatory and financing challenges. Congress should consider **financial incentives and technical support for transmission** project planning, siting, permitting, and construction to enable new clean energy investments and jobs in rural America.

## V. Transportation

Travel and business restrictions, combined with the economic downturn, are creating immediate and long-term challenges in the transportation sector. The transportation sector is also major source of climate and local air pollution, which is a public health threat with disproportionate impacts on environmental justice communities, who often reside on the 'fenceline' of transportation corridors. Federal investments must be made to maintain community connectivity and preserve employment and supply chains while also putting Americans to work building modernized and sustainable infrastructure.

Transit remains a critical means of access for many, including essential workers, and is one of the lowest-carbon transportation options available. We must support transit systems through additional funding to the **Mass Transit Account within the Highway Trust Fund**, needed to maintain operations, keep transit workers safe, and sanitize frequently shared surfaces. A smart recovery package should also look to create jobs by increasing funding to build new public transit infrastructure through programs like the **Capital Investment Grant** program.

Federal recovery legislation should provide support to incentivize the purchase of zero-emission vehicles and installation of associated infrastructure. SEEC's leadership continues to support **raising the manufacturer sales cap for the light-duty electric vehicle tax credit** and **extending tax incentives for alternative fuel infrastructure and fuel cell vehicles**.[6] We also recommend **wide-scale deployment of highway and community electric vehicle charging infrastructure** through a variety of funding sources. Congress can utilize existing DOE authorities through the **State Energy Program** and the **Transportation Electrification Grant Program** (Sec. 131 of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007) and provide additional funding for the **Clean Cities Program**[7] to expand the development of alternative fuel infrastructure. Finally, while we transition to zero-emission vehicles, we must do more to reduce the pollution footprint of combustion engine automobiles by **preserving fuel**

[6] As an example, see H.R. 5164, the EV CHARGE Act of 2019
[7] As an example, see H.R. 5518, to authorize the Clean Cities Program

**economy and vehicle emissions standards** that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, create more auto sector jobs, and save drivers money at the pump.[8]

Congress should also consider investments to support medium- and heavy-duty zero-emission vehicles. EPA's **Clean School Bus Program** (Section 741 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005) should be modified to make electric buses eligible under the program. We would also support alternative approaches to deliver **grants, loans, or rebates to school districts and local transit agencies** for zero-emission buses that could significantly improve air quality for children and low-income neighborhoods while spurring domestic clean-bus manufacturing. These medium- and heavy-duty efforts should include funding for **zero-emission infrastructure along highway corridors and at ports, warehouses, rail yards, and other freight facilities** to support deployment of zero-emission trucks and material handling equipment. We can create jobs and reduce pollution at our ports by spurring investment in zero-emissions technology and infrastructure, such as replacing diesel-burning cargo handling equipment, port harbor craft, drayage trucks, and other equipment with zero emissions equipment and technology; funding the installation of shore power for docked ships, and electric charging stations for vehicles and cargo equipment; and developing clean energy microgrids onsite at the ports to power their facilities.[9]

Diesel exhaust, which is often associated with medium- and heavy-duty vehicles, can have serious health impacts and disproportionately affects environmental justice communities. COVID-19 poses a major threat to Americans with pre-existing respiratory illnesses. That is why Congress should increase funding for EPA's **Diesel Emissions Reductions Act Program**[10] to replace the dirtiest diesel engines, DOT's **Congestion Mitigation Air Quality Improvement Program** to reduce harmful vehicle pollution and improve air quality, and FTA's **Low or No Emissions Vehicle Program** to assist transit agencies to transition their fleets to zero-emission vehicles. Congress should **set aside funding within one or more of these programs to support pollution reductions at ports.**

Funding for DOT's **Better Utilizing Investment to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grants** and other DOT programs should prioritize zero- and low-emissions infrastructure projects, address the maintenance backlogs of existing roads and bridges, and provide additional funding to support the operation and **expansion of public transit systems, bike lanes, and pedestrian pathways**. Congress should increase funding for the **Surface Transportation Block Grant -Transportation Alternative Program**, which would assist the numerous communities that are retrofitting their streets to accommodate higher levels of biking and walking by implementing slow streets, widening sidewalks, and installing pop up bike lane networks in response to the pandemic. Congress should examine how to best advance the goals of **"Buy Clean"** for Federal infrastructure funding, which would create market signals and incentives for the manufacturers of low-emissions building materials. Congress should seek to encourage greater transparency and data collection associated with the embodied emissions of construction materials, including steel and cement.

[8] As an example, see H.R. 978, the Clean and Efficient Cars Act of 2019
[9] As an example, see H.R. 7024, the Climate Smart Ports Act.
[10] As an example, see H.R. 1768, Diesel Emissions Reduction Act of 2019

## VI. Clean Energy Financing

In the past, access to financing has presented challenges for clean energy and sustainable infrastructure projects. These challenges will be exacerbated during the COVID-19-related economic downturn. Fortunately, DOE's Loan Program Office already has $40 billion in authorized loan guarantee authority that can be put to work quickly. This office's programs have made investments in a wide variety of innovative, low-carbon projects such as utility-scale solar energy, energy storage, electricity transmission, and advanced vehicle manufacturing.

Congress should seek to lower barriers to enable loan guarantee authority to be used to finance energy infrastructure projects. Modest reforms to DOE's **Title XVII loan program** can put more than $23 billion in loan authority to work supporting innovative energy projects. These changes should include expanding project and applicant eligibility, including making states eligible, and reducing applicant fees. Congress should appropriate funding to cover the cost of credit subsidies associated with loans. Congress should also consider reviving the expired authority to provide financial backing for commercialized, shovel-ready clean energy and transmission projects facing financial uncertainty due to the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis. Similarly, DOE's **Advanced Technology Vehicles Manufacturing loan program** has over $17 billion in loan authority available to support the manufacture of eligible vehicles. With modest reforms, this program can unleash significant financing to support the next generation of zero-emission vehicle manufacturing (see Section VII Advanced Energy Manufacturing Programs). In addition, Congress can support the development of clean energy and job creation on tribal lands through increased investments in DOE's **Tribal Energy Loan Guarantee Program.**

Congress should **establish and capitalize a National Clean Energy and Sustainable Infrastructure Bank** to provide loans to project developers and manufacturers for transportation, clean energy, and water infrastructure projects in need of funding and match private sector investments. Congress should also direct the Treasury Department to issue **Clean Energy Victory Bonds**[11] to enable Americans to purchase Treasury bonds to fund programs that support renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies.

## VII. Advanced Energy Manufacturing Programs

Growing manufacturing jobs should be a central part of our long-term economic recovery. According to the National Association of Manufacturers, for each worker in manufacturing, there are another five employees hired elsewhere, and the COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of developing and maintaining strong domestic supply chains. Economic recovery should prioritize revitalizing America's domestic manufacturing base, including investments to support U.S. leadership in the production of advanced energy systems to enhance our nation's long-term competitiveness.

The United States has a tremendous opportunity to lead the world in the manufacturing of zero-emission vehicles. Congress should direct the Administration to utilize DOE's **Advanced Technology Vehicle Manufacturing loan program** to support production of zero- and low-emission vehicles. Small statutory reforms can expand the program to cover production of

[11] As an example, see H.R.4041, the Clean Energy Victory Bond Act of 2019

medium- and heavy-duty clean vehicles and components. Congress should also fund DOE's **Domestic Manufacturing Conversion Grant Program** (Sec. 132 of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007) to support the retooling and conversion of facilities to produce clean vehicles and components.

Congress should authorize additional funding for the **48C Advanced Energy Tax Credit** (Sec. 1302 of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009), to incentivize facilities to manufacture clean energy and transportation systems and energy efficient products, and make the credit refundable. Considering the financing challenges during the economic downturn, Congress should consider establishing a DOE grant program to support advanced energy system manufacturing and expand eligibility to include zero- and low-emissions industrial products, such as steel, cement, and chemicals.

In order to promote industrial energy efficiency, Congress should **increase the Investment Tax Credit for combined heat and waste heat to power systems**. Funding for DOE's **CHP Technical Assistance Partnerships** and **Advanced Manufacturing Office (AMO)** can also promote adoption of energy efficient technologies and energy management systems for industrial applications with a particular focus on support for small- and medium-sized manufacturers.

Congress should grant EPA limited new authority to direct an orderly **phasedown of hydrofluorocarbons**. According to analysis from the University of Maryland, an 85% phasedown over 15 years will result in 33,000 new U.S. manufacturing jobs and a 25% increase in U.S. exports for heating, ventilation, air conditioning, and refrigeration industries.

## VIII. Energy Innovation

Congress should build upon the bipartisan and bicameral interest in advancing an energy innovation agenda. These investments will promote research jobs and demonstrate emerging technologies in the near-term while having the potential to ensure U.S. leadership in the commercialization, manufacture, and export of the advanced energy systems that will be used around the world in the future.

Congress should provide significant funding to DOE's **Advanced Research Project Agency-Energy (ARPA-E)**. ARPA-E was first funded in an economic recovery package over a decade ago, and today, ARPA-E grantees have launched over 80 new companies, been issued nearly 400 patents, secured billions of dollars in private-sector follow-on funding, and have continued to make the United States a global leader in cutting-edge energy technology development. We should also support funding for **DOE demonstration projects**. Like ARPA-E, the 2009 economic recovery package made strategic demonstration investments, resulting in the commercialization and cost reductions of several clean energy technologies. Congress should also make investments to address critical gaps in federal research by creating new programs to support innovation in harder to decarbonize industries, such as cement, steel, and heavy transportation.[12] We should also increase funding to the AMO to award competitive grants to eligible entities for first of kind commercialization projects – including demonstration and pilots

[12] As an example, see H.R. 4230, the Clean Industrial Technology Act.

– of technologies that increase energy savings and lower greenhouse gas emissions of difficult to decarbonize U.S. manufacturers.

## IX. Water Infrastructure & Environmental Remediation

Investing in long-neglected water infrastructure and environmental remediation projects will generate local construction and engineering jobs and while enabling economic development opportunities.

According to a 2016 study by Water Environment Federation and WateReuse Association, 16.5 jobs are generated for every $1 million invested in water infrastructure. Congress should significantly increase funding for EPA's **Drinking Water State Revolving Fund** and **Clean Water State Revolving Fund**, as well as USDA's **Water and Waste Disposal Loan and Grant Program** and **the Sewer Overflow and Stormwater Reuse Municipal Control Grant Program**, to support investments in the water systems responsible for providing safe and affordable drinking water, managing waste- and stormwater, and building extreme weather resilience. Congress should extend Buy America requirements to Drinking Water SRF spending. Congress should also leverage the Drinking Water SRF, or establish other funding opportunities, to address contaminants of concern in communities across the nation, including lead and per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). Congress should make funding available for the **full replacement of lead service lines, including privately owned lines, at no cost to homeowners, lead testing and remediation for schools and daycares,** and **remediation of water sources contaminated with PFAS**. Congress could also help reduce lead exposure in drinking water by increasing funding for the **EPA's Reducing Lead in Drinking Water program and the School Drinking Fountain Replacement Program.** Clean Water SRF funding should **prioritize green infrastructure projects** to produce both mitigation and adaptation benefits while also improving air and water quality and the health of nearby communities. Both SRFs should provide states with additional authority to subsidize loan recipients through forgiveness of principal, negative interest loans, and grants. Additionally, Congress should also significantly increase funding for the **Small and Disadvantaged Communities Drinking Water Grant Program, the U.S.-Mexico Border Water Infrastructure Grant Program, and the Alaska Native Villages and Rural Communities Water Grant program.**

Congress should also fund EPA and DOI programs that remediate toxic pollution while supporting economic redevelopment opportunities, such as EPA's **Brownfields Program** and **Superfund Program.** Today, more than 50 million people live within three miles of a Superfund site, and brownfield sites can be found in every Congressional District. These programs create jobs while addressing public health threats to local communities. Remediation of these sites can enable communities to be revitalized and land be put back into productive use. EPA's Brownfields program for example has led to the leveraging of over $24 billion in state, local, and private funds, and has helped create nearly 130,000 jobs while cleaning up 70,000 acres for reuse. According to the EPA, Superfund currently has the largest number of unfunded, construction-ready projects in 15 years, indicating a significant number of shovel-ready projects that could commence quickly.

It is absolutely critical that we use recovery legislation to invest in communities with abandoned coalmine and orphaned drilling wells. These hazards pose serious risks to community health and economic growth, and investments to reclaim them can support economic development and job growth. **We encourage congress to expand the use of the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund to provide support for economic revitalization, diversification, and development in economically distressed mining communities through the reclamation and restoration of land and water resources adversely affected by coal mining.**[13] We also support inclusion of funding for hard rock mine and uranium mine clean up across federal, state, tribal and private lands. To create jobs in areas struggling with the abrupt decrease in oil prices and to protect communities from the health hazards associated with abandoned oil and gas wells, we urge **increased funding for plugging and reclaiming orphaned oil and gas wells** across the country. Appalachian coal communities have been hit particularly hard by both the health and economic impacts of abandoned mines, and we must do more to help support recovery in these communities. We urge increased funding for restoration and revitalization projects through the **Appalachian Regional Commission and the Economic Development Administration**. We can further support coal workers by extending the excise tax on coal mines that provides funding for the Black Lung Disability Trust Fund.[14]

## X. Natural Infrastructure & Environmental Restoration

We can create millions of jobs, improve public health, and increase community resilience by investing in the restoration of our natural resources and our outdoor recreation infrastructure. Conservation investments make excellent stimulus investments, generating almost two and a half dollars for every dollar invested. They also provide the added benefits of removing pollution from our air and water; expanding access to nature and recreational activities; improving community resilience to extreme weather such as droughts, floods and hurricanes; sequestering carbon pollution, and protecting wildlife.

To begin with, Congress should support **full and permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF)**, which is an important economic driver that supports the booming outdoor recreation economy, as well as block grants for building, repairing and improving accessibility for recreational infrastructure across state, local and tribal communities. In particular, we support a focus on **increasing park space and outdoor recreation in underserved urban communities through the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership (ORLP)**.[15] Congress can also create jobs repairing **infrastructure across our national parks and public lands**.

We can further create jobs and increase community resilience by restoring natural ecosystems that serve as flood buffers, protect against storm surges, and help communities better withstand droughts, often while fostering outdoor recreation, tourism and better habitats for fish and wildlife. Congress should support **coastal restoration projects, waiving requirements for**

[13] As examples, see H.R. 2156, the RECLAIM Act and H.R. 4248 the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act Amendments of 2019

[14] As examples, see H.R. 3876, the Black Lung Benefits Disability Trust Fund Solvency Act and H.R. 1912 the Black Lung Benefits Improvement Act (115th)

[15] As an example, see H.R. 4512, the Outdoors for All Act

**matching funds and prioritizing projects that have climate adaptation benefits or improve habitat for threatened or endangered species**.

Congress should also increase funding for **the NOAA Coastal Resilience Grant Program and Coastal Zone Management Grants, Army Corps Ecosystem Restoration, the National Estuaries Program** and **Environmental Protection Agency geographic restoration programs** that serve critical ecosystems across the country, from the Great Lakes to the Everglades. We should also provide strong funding for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)'s **Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC)** pre-disaster hazard mitigation program. Our oceans play a vital role in our economy and climate, and we should take this opportunity to invest in programs that will create jobs while protecting our oceans and the economies that rely on them.[16] Examples of programs that we should invest in include the **National Sea Grant College program, the Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS), the National Estuarine Research Reserves (NERRS),** and **the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program.**

Forests and public lands also provide critical ecological services to communities, from water filtration to sequestering carbon pollution, and we can make job-creating investments that will help protect our forests and nearby communities. Investments in **Bureau of Land Management's National Conservation Lands, Operation of the National Park System, U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration, the Reforestation Trust Fund, implementation of National Forest and Grassland management plans, and FEMA's Fire Prevention and Safety Grants,** can help us support forest-related job creation, improve our forest sustainability, and better protect communities from extreme wildfires. We further encourage the establishment of a grant program that helps communities implement local defense plans and use science-based methods for mitigating wildfire damage.[17] Another important program is the **Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) program**. Through diverse, innovative partnerships between municipalities and non-governmental organizations, the UCF program helps secure and improve local forest cover. Improved forest cover can simultaneously improve air quality, reduce energy demands, and capture GHG emissions. These benefits can be felt by all communities, but in particular, the UCF program is important to ensuring underserved communities have equitable access to neighborhood trees. Urban, low-income communities across the country typically have inadequate tree canopy coverage and limited access to green space in comparison to urban, high-income areas, creating hotter and more expensive living conditions for residents. The impact of tree inequity is further exacerbated by the climate crisis, which disproportionately impacts these same communities. The UCF program also plays a critical role for communities battling invasive and non-native pests that are devastating local forests. Investments from the UCF program can help reduce these infestation risks, benefiting not only the local community, but also surrounding localities, since many tree pests proliferate and spread across states. We also support the creation of a **new grant program that offers homeowners free or reduced-cost tree-planting services** to help shade homes, reduce energy use, and tackle the climate crisis.[18] Additional resources for restoring trees to landscapes outside of federal lands could be provided via **new dedicated funding for tree restoration within the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)** and by **expanding incentives for tree**

[16] As an example, see H.R. 3548 the BLUE GLOBE Act
[17] As an example, see H.R. 5901, the Wildfire Defense Act.
[18] As an example, see H.R. 5615, the TREES Act

**restoration on historically forested lands within the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP).** Such investments would help spur jobs on tree planting crews, in nurseries, and as foresters.

We can also create jobs protecting wildlife. Investments in wildlife recovery can create jobs restoring habits and expanding recreation infrastructure across all our states, territories and tribal lands. [19] Additionally we can **invest in the construction of wildlife crossings over roadways** that create construction jobs while reducing wildlife-vehicle collisions by making these crossings **eligible for funding under the Surface Transportation Block Grant program.**

## XI. Equity and Environmental Justice

A sustainable recovery plan is an opportunity for a comprehensive approach to reducing legacy environmental and economic impacts on communities, which is why we have highlighted critical programs to serve frontline communities throughout our letter. We must promote policies and projects that reduce locally harmful pollution in communities coping with the cumulative impacts of multiple pollution sources without imposing further risks. **The programs and investments discussed throughout this letter are critical to supporting historically underserved communities, but only if we make sure that we are prioritizing investments in those communities that need it most.** We must ensure funding for **transit, clean water infrastructure, brownfield clean up, the Low and No Emissions Vehicles Program, and the other programs outlined in this letter** are directed towards low-income communities, communities of color, deindustrialized communities, Tribal and indigenous communities, and rural communities.

Additionally, Congress can provide aid to communities through continued support for **EPA environmental justice grants,[20] the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), and assistance to help low-income families cover the costs of water bills.** Further, LIHEAP funding should be substantially increased, states should be allowed to dedicate greater shares of funding toward weatherization, home electrification and onsite and community solar, while eligibility should be increased to 250% of the poverty level to reach a broader range of families in need of emergency assistance. Increased funding for the **EPA Office of Enforcement and Office of Revitalization** should also be included, with a focus on ensuring that enforcement actions and revitalization efforts are focused on communities of color and low-income communities that need it most.

We also urge support for **education and training programs[21]** for underrepresented communities in clean energy industries, as well as support for the **National Institute of Environmental Health Science Environmental Career Worker Training Program** to provide job and safety training to help members of communities of color and low-income communities secure jobs in environmental restoration, construction, handling hazardous materials and waste, and emergency response.

[19] As an example, see H.R. 3742, the Recovering America's Wildlife Act
[20] As examples, see H.R. 5986, Environmental Justice for All Act, H.R. 3923, Environmental Justice Act of 2019, and H.R. 6692, to authorize funding with a specific focus on COVID.
[21] As an example, see H.R. 1315, the Blue Collar to Green Collar Jobs Development Act of 2019.

Equally important, as Americans are advised to continue to shelter-in-place to combat the spread of COVID-19, members of environmental justice communities are experiencing adverse indoor conditions, including exposure to pollution from appliances and poor ventilation in low-income housing. Indoor air pollutants pose serious health risks, especially for children, and increase susceptibility to chronic health conditions. **Modernizing and electrifying our nation's long-neglected public housing** will have positive health impacts, while creating jobs. We encourage creation of a **fund to invest in eliminating gas stoves and electrification of heating and hot water in public housing** nationwide in order to help eliminate the respiratory triggers produced in public housing. These and other investments focused on justice are essential to ensuring that our recovery is inclusive and equitable.

Finally, it is essential that we ensure communities of color and low-income communities have a voice in the development of projects affecting their communities. Environmental, health and economic impacts of major federal actions must be adequately assessed and the public given a say under the **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).**[22] For too long, frontline communities have suffered disproportionate negative impacts from federally funded and approved projects. We need to do better. We need to prevent rollbacks of NEPA and improve funding and staffing for NEPA implementation. Environmental reviews and public input required by NEPA are critical tools that help us build in a just, smart and sustainable way. This law helps protect communities and taxpayer investments by requiring a review of a project's impacts. Our economic recovery can't afford wasted money on ill-considered development that saddles communities with financial and environmental burdens to repair.

## XII. Sustainable Agriculture

This pandemic is underscoring the fragility of a food system that is reliant on a national network of businesses to move food around the country rather than one that is supportive of communities accessing locally grown foods with fewer miles and barriers. This has resulted in significant supply chain issues and unnecessary waste, all during a time when food insecurity across the country is increasing and charitable organizations have seen dramatically reduced capacity in their ability to meet the needs of the hungry. **Increased funding for the USDA's Food Loss and Waste Reduction Liaison** (and related responsibilities), and allowing the **USDA to enter into new cooperative agreements**, are critical tools in mitigating food waste.

Congress should enable organizations to develop new alternative marketing projects to assist farmers with their response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and bolster their capacity to be resilient in the face of future pressures by **raising the funding and waiving cost-sharing for USDA's Local Agriculture Market Programs (LAMP).**[23] This will support growers of all sizes through the creation of a more robust outlets such as farmers' markets, programs designed to encourage the institutional procurement of local food, and the development of other local marketing channels. This allows for more money to make its way directly to farms, and thereby into the local economies where its impact is multiplied.

[22] See as an example, H.R. 5986, the Environmental Justice for All Act.
[23] As an example, see H.R. 5861, the Agriculture Resilience Act

Even before the COVID-19 crisis, farmers experienced many challenges—they operate on razor thin margins, trade wars jeopardize export markets, mental health and substance abuse disorders have reached crisis proportions and are ravaging rural communities, all while extreme weather events are becoming more frequent. Farmers are acutely feeling the economic effect of climate change, which is making it increasingly difficult for farmers to stay on their land and turn a profit. Inaction on climate change will not only further threaten an already strained demographic (farmers and farmworkers), it damages rural communities and economies. Prioritizing funding for **USDA's Climate Hubs**, which link USDA research and program agencies with farmer, educational, and technical entities, is a crucial step in addressing the role of agriculture in climate change mitigation. Congress should provide **new, dedicated funding to Cooperative Extension programs** so that they may create positions focused on resiliency and disaster assistance, as well as the agricultural engineering assistance necessary to avoid climate driven damages, therefore protecting the community food supply. These programs will proactively identify mitigation strategies to address issues that farmers are facing today, as well as potential and unknown challenges that lie ahead.

Farmers have a critical role to play in reversing the effects of climate change by improving soil health and increasing the amount of carbon stored in the soil. New technology is helping farmers more easily measure and quantify the outcomes of conservation practices, but there are missing pieces in the infrastructure needed to make that a widespread reality. Congress should increase funding for the **Soil Health Demonstration Trial** established in the 2018 Farm Bill to fill in the gaps around measuring and monitoring soil health improvements. Furthermore, Congress should provide funding and authorization for the **Secretary of the Treasury, in consultation with the Secretary of Agriculture, to develop a tax credit to incentivize carbon capture on farms** to pay farmers for the ecosystem services they provide. This not only would offer a potential additional source of revenue for farmers working to recover from the impacts of COVID-19, it can also serve as a much-needed diversification of enterprises in the event of a disaster on-farm. In addition, **state soil health block grants** will ensure new and very valuable state soil health programs will not suffer due to the states' forced reallocation of resources to respond to the pandemic.

**Increasing funding for USDA programs such as the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program** can also provide a valuable revenue source for farmers to convert some of the equity in their land into cash and ensure farmland is not developed. Additionally, **authorizing a new "Debt for Working Lands Program"** would offer much needed forgiveness of existing Farm Service Agency loans, in exchange for protecting agricultural land through a permanent agricultural conservation easement or a long-term covenant. Congress can further assist in this valuable process by providing **additional funding to the Conservation Stewardship Program and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP),** which helps improve farm income and farm recovery, while still encouraging and removing barriers to conservation.

## XIII. Workforce Development

The success of our economic recovery efforts will be predicated on development of a workforce with the skills and training necessary to fill newly created jobs. Congress should **support community colleges, apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs, and other**

**educational institutions** to establish and expand training programs for workers and unemployed Americans looking for new careers in sectors that would be supported by the recommendations outlined in this letter. This should include a specific focus on developing opportunities for those looking to start careers in the renewable energy sector, especially in emerging industries, such as the offshore wind industry.[24] This must also include an emphasis on creating opportunities for historically disadvantaged and underrepresented workers.

While many Americans remain at home, the federal government should utilize this time by **supporting the establishment and expansion of online training and certification programs** for building performance contractors and other applicable occupations to prepare America's workforce with the skills and certifications necessary to be prepared as we rebuild, retrofit, and modernize our infrastructure and our economy as soon as appropriate.

Congress should also **reestablish the Civilian Conservation Corps**[25] and **expand opportunities for existing service corps through the Corporation for National and Community Service** in order to support local conservation, restoration, clean energy, and other community-based projects.

## XIV. Agency Enforcement Activities & Staffing Levels

Federal agencies' human infrastructure will be critical to the successful implementation of the recommendations outlined in this letter; however, we know the Trump Administration has adopted a lax attitude toward career employee hiring and retention, as well as enforcement of existing environmental protections before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Environmental Protection Agency, for example, is at a multi-decade low in terms of staffing and enforcement actions. Congress should **increase funding for federal agencies' review, permitting and enforcement teams** and **provide funding to hire significant numbers of new employees** in order to administer the additional appropriations and new authorities outlined in this request. A critical part of this recovery must be rebuilding the capacity of the public sector and public services to prepare for and respond to disasters like COVID-19 today, to carry out the work outlined in this letter, and to keep our communities safe and stable for the future.

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[24] As examples, see H.R. 3068, the Offshore Wind Jobs and Opportunity Act and H.R. 6802, the Grants for Renewable Energy Education for the Nation Act (115th)

[25] As an example, see the 21st Century Conservation Corps for our Health and Our Jobs Act (116th - no bill number yet)