



The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

September 20, 2021

Dear Chairman Pallone,

On behalf of the Center for Law and Social Policy's New Deal for Youth initiative (ND4Y), we would like to express our support for the *Build Back Better Act*. This legislation includes transformational investments that would have a significant impact on issues of environmental justice as related to young people living in America, many of whom are people of color and live within low-income, marginalized communities. We ask that the Committee adopt these provisions as proposed, and that the House moves swiftly to send this bill to the Senate for consideration.

ND4Y is a youth-led, youth-centered effort advocating for the creation of new systems, policies, investments, and structures that reimagine life for young people in America. ND4Y Changemakers, the young people leading this effort, believe that any act addressing environmental justice must acknowledge the disproportionate burden marginalized communities bear as related to climate change, urban planning, and the desecration of sacred land. While far from perfect, we believe provisions included in the *Build Back Better Act* recognize this harm, the intersectional nature of these issues, and that the legislation allocates funding to help mitigate the damage caused by the problems we continue to face.

ND4Y applauds the Committee for including Environmental and Climate Justice Block Grants in the *Build Back Better Act* that invest \$5 billion into community-led projects to address environmental and public health harm caused by pollution and climate change. We believe that the people in communities most affected by issues often have the most effective solutions and should be empowered to implement them. We commend that this bill provides direct funding to impacted communities, that it requires community input into how these funds are spent at both the state and federal level, and that it will fund local projects that will decrease pollution and improve climate readiness.

We support the ways in which the \$2.5 billion allocated for the planning and installation of solar energy tools in low-income homes would also lead to workforce skill development and job opportunities. In alignment with our ND4Y Environmental Justice Demands, we appreciate that these funds will go directly to entities that are generative in green jobs, apprenticeships, and educational opportunities that prioritize both the environmental and economic needs of marginalized communities.

We also believe that the \$30 billion earmarked for replacing lead service lines in drinking water would positively affect the public health of marginalized communities for years to come. This provision



underscores the ways in which the physical wellbeing of our communities is impacted by unjust environmental practices and will help to ensure that new policies do not create new or exacerbate health inequities.

Environmental justice is an intersectional issue area, dealing with social, racial, and economic inequities, revealing the need to work towards the just distribution of decision-making and resources to foster authentic community-oriented solutions. We appreciate that the *Build Back Better Act* offers a foundation on which to advance our vision of Environmental Justice. We are not only demanding change, but we are also willing and ready to do what it takes to work to make it possible.

In the coming weeks ND4Y Changemakers hope to collaborate with the Committee and other Members of Congress to ensure that these provisions make it into the final bill and become law. The provisions we have outlined related to environmental justice can help to change the present and future of young people living in America.

If you have any questions, please contact newdealfor youth@clasp.org.

Thank you for your consideration,

A New Deal for Youth Changemakers

Cc: Members of the Committee on Energy and Commerce