

**TESTIMONY OF  
MICHAEL S. REGAN**

**ADMINISTRATOR  
U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY**

**BEFORE THE  
U.S. HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERIOR, ENVIRONMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES**

**April 21, 2021**

Thank you, Chairwoman Pingree, Ranking Member Joyce, and members of the Subcommittee. I am grateful for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's discretionary funding request for Fiscal Year 2022.

Before I get to the funding request, I would like to discuss the bold vision laid out by President Biden in the American Jobs Plan. This plan is a transformational investment that puts working people first and will help ensure we reduce pollution and help create good quality jobs.

**The American Jobs Plan**

In March, President Biden released the American Jobs Plan. This plan recognizes that now is the time for a bold, once-in-a-generation investment in America to put millions of people to work and lay the foundation for economic growth for decades to come by investing in infrastructure.

Infrastructure in the 21<sup>st</sup> century extends far beyond just roads and bridges. It means investing in our electrical grid and building more resilient transmission. It means revitalizing digital infrastructure to expand access to reliable, high-speed broadband internet in every pocket of the country, especially rural areas and underserved communities. And it also means investing in our drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, cleaning up and restoring our land, and investing in programs to reduce air pollution for our kids.

***Guaranteeing clean water for all***

The American Jobs Plan proposes a \$111 billion investment in water infrastructure, including a \$45 billion investment to replace 100% of lead service lines and pipes through the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Drinking Water State Revolving Fund and Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act grants. Replacing lead service lines is vital for public health and yet EPA estimates that six to 10 million homes in the United States and up to 400,000 schools and daycare centers have lead service lines. The impact of lead exposure, including through drinking water, is a serious public health issue and its adverse effects on children are all too well known. In children, lead can cause irreversible and life-long health effects, including decreasing IQ, focus, and academic achievement.

The plan also would invest \$56 billion in grants and low-cost flexible loans to states, Tribes, territories, and disadvantaged communities across the country to upgrade and modernize America's drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater systems, tackle new contaminants, and

support clean water infrastructure across rural America. The American Jobs Plan also provides \$10 billion in funding to monitor and remediate PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances) in drinking water and to invest in rural small water systems, and household well and wastewater systems, including drainage fields.

In total, these investments will create millions of good paying jobs, including union jobs.

We know from experience that water infrastructure investments not only improve public health—they also create good-paying jobs. Through our State Revolving Funds, EPA has already provided more than \$189 billion in financial assistance to nearly 43,000 water quality infrastructure projects and 16,500 drinking water projects. This has created over 300,000 jobs in the last two years alone. Through the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) loan program, EPA has provided \$9 billion in credit assistance to help finance more than \$19 billion for water infrastructure while creating nearly 47,000 jobs and saving ratepayers \$4 billion.

### ***Investing in clean buses for kids***

When I was a kid growing up in Eastern North Carolina I had to use an inhaler, an experience familiar for far too many kids. That is why the American Jobs Plan proposes to electrify at least 20 percent of our yellow school bus fleet through a new Clean Buses for Kids Program at EPA. We know this type of investment works and that it is important to protect kids on their way to and from school. Since 2008, Congress has provided funding through EPA's Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) for more than 28,000 school bus upgrades, including more than 4,000 school bus replacements. The Clean Buses for Kids Program is a new program, which would build on the lessons learned from DERA while leaving the existing program intact.

Reducing emissions from school buses has demonstrated positive health benefits for the children who ride them, the drivers, people around school bus loading areas, and the communities in which they operate. These investments will also boost market demand to create jobs, build out infrastructure and support U.S. manufacturing.

### ***Cleaning up and restoring our land***

In the 40 years since the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) was signed into law, we have significant progress on cleaning up and restoring our land, but the work is far from over. Under my leadership, EPA will do everything in its power to hold bad actors accountable for environmental degradation and return land to safe and productive use for communities. Communities located within one mile of Superfund sites are disproportionately communities of color and low-income. Remediation of these sites will strengthen climate resilience, improve public health, and expand job opportunities both in these communities, and the nation at large.

The American Jobs Plan proposes a \$5 billion investment in the remediation and redevelopment of Brownfield and Superfund sites, as well as related economic and workforce development programs. Cleaning up contaminated sites so they can be returned to productive use can be an engine for economic development across the country. Since Congress started the Brownfields

program, federal investments have leveraged \$34.6 billion, supported over 176,000 jobs, and thousands of properties have been cleaned up or made ready for reuse.

### **The FY2022 Discretionary Funding Request**

President Biden’s proposed FY2022 discretionary request for the Environmental Protection Agency of \$11.2 billion advances key EPA priorities, including tackling the climate crisis, delivering environmental justice, and rebuilding core functions at the Agency. The FY2022 discretionary funding request prioritizes working with and supporting state, local and Tribal leaders in expanding capacity in community development, cleaning up toxic waste, and investing in water infrastructure projects that create good paying jobs. Within the EPA topline, \$1.8 billion will support investments related to tackling the climate crisis, with more than half supporting environmental justice work. In addition, the request dedicates resources to restoring scientific integrity at the Agency and ensuring the foundation of our decision-making process is grounded in science.

EPA is also seeking additional resources and staff to enforce the environmental laws that Congress has passed so that all companies play on a level playing field and our communities share in public health benefits.

### ***Restoring the Agency***

Responding to the environmental crises at hand requires a systemic approach in expanding the Agency’s capacity. EPA lost nearly 1,000 dedicated staff over the past four years, and it has affected the Agency’s ability to carry out its core duties and functions to protect public health and the environment. The discretionary request invests over \$110 million to restore EPA’s staff capacity and to rebuild programmatic capabilities that focus on protecting clean air, land, and water.

Restoring capacity across the Agency will strengthen our ability to tackle multiple priorities, from clean air and water, to cutting edge research at the Agency. Restoring the voice of our employees and supporting their efforts—through the best available science—to advance the mission of the Agency has never been more important.

### ***Tackling the climate crisis***

Under the Biden-Harris Administration, EPA is reprioritizing addressing climate change with the urgency the crisis demands. The discretionary request invests \$1.8 billion in programs to tackle the climate crisis while also delivering environmental justice to marginalized and over-burdened communities, growing the economy, and creating good paying jobs.

This request invests in programs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including an additional \$100 million for air quality grants to states and tribes to tackle emission levels on a local and regional scale. An additional \$30 million is included to improve knowledge of the impacts of climate change on human health and the environment through our research programs—more than doubling EPA’s climate change research while providing additional investments to decrease emissions of methane and hydrofluorocarbons.

### ***Prioritizing environmental justice***

The communities hardest hit and struggling the most under the weight of the pandemic are often communities of color, lower income communities, and Tribal nations. For decades, many of these same communities have been overburdened with air pollution and other environmental hazards. An individual's skin color or their zip code shouldn't determine whether they have clean air to breathe and water to drink.

This request invests \$936 million towards a new Accelerating Environmental and Economic Justice Initiative that will help secure environmental justice for communities who too often have been left behind while creating jobs, cleaning up pollution, and implementing the Justice40 Initiative to advance racial equity. Like climate change, environmental justice underpins the work of the Agency and is an integral part of this national conversation surrounding equality and equity in the nation's communities.

The environmental justice initiative invests in a new community air quality monitoring and notification program, provides additional funds to enforce existing laws meant to protect communities from hazardous pollution, and allocates resources to hold polluters liable in civil and criminal suits. As part of the Justice40 Initiative, \$100 million will support development and implementation of a community notification program to monitor and provide real-time data to the public on current environmental pollution. These investments build on the funds provided by the American Rescue Plan, which will help address disproportionate environmental or public health risks in minority and low-income populations resulting from exposure to pollution and the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **American Rescue Plan**

I also want to acknowledge and thank Congress for recognizing EPA's critical role in addressing human health and environmental disparities through the American Rescue Plan. Polluted air, contaminated water, and hazardous waste continue to threaten public health, and the COVID-19 pandemic has compounded the seriousness of such inequities for communities for color and low-income communities across the nation. The American Rescue Plan provides \$100 million for the EPA to address these issues; \$50 million targeted specifically to advance environmental justice and \$50 million to help states, Tribes, and localities improve air quality for their communities. As we work to implement programs and projects to best maximize the use of this funding, I am focused on ensuring these vital funds have the highest and best impact on the ground.

### **Conclusion**

In closing, I want to thank you for the opportunity to be here today. I look forward to our continued partnership and welcome any questions you may have.