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Questions from Rep. Betty McCollum, MN

1. What challenges have EJ communities typically faced in accessing federal funding to improve their environmental conditions and build green infrastructure?

EJ communities do not have the resources to create an infrastructure to access federal funding. Beginning with applying for and receiving funds, there are not enough EJ non-profits in our communities, and municipalities are also underresourced and understaffed. When communities are able to learn about and have capacity to apply to funds, federal funding is attached to very detailed accounting and financial processes. Non-profits manage many projects and grants, thereby making it difficult to ensure the adequate reporting requested by federal funds. Additionally, the scope of federal grants frequently do not align to the comprehensive, holistic approach taken by community.

2. Will the Environmental Justice for All Act make a substantial difference in overcoming those challenges?

EJ for All Act would create a well-rounded approach in their grants by including uses of research, education, outreach, development, and implementation of projects to address environmental and public health from a community lens. By creating a more robust scope of work for federal grants, community-based organizations find more benefits in applying to them and completing community based work that is relevant to on-the-ground issues.