



February 11th, 2022

The Honorable Raúl M. Grijalva, Chairman  
The Committee on Natural Resources  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1324 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Grijalva,

The Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed supports and urges passage of the Environmental Justice for All Act (H.R. 2021). We thank you for your leadership on this issue and pledge our support to move this bill through Congress and to the President's desk to be signed into law. Our coalition represents more than 175 organizations across the Delaware River watershed, which cover more than 13,539 square miles and are home to over 13.3 million residents across 4 states.

It is no coincidence that marginalized communities continue to bear the burden of living in close proximity to hazardous sites, facing higher risk for exposure to toxic chemicals and associated health impacts like asthma and lead poisoning. As our nation grapples with racism, we must recognize that our environmental laws and policies contribute to this never-ending cycle. The Environmental Justice for All Act seeks to break this cycle and would strengthen legal protections to combat environmental injustices. With this bill, people in cities such as Camden, Trenton, Wilmington, and Philadelphia, could bring statutory claims for damages under common law and request injunctive relief for environmentally caused health crisis events that have severe impacts on children and future generations. It would strengthen the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by restoring the ability of individuals to bring actions against entities engaging in discriminatory practices.

All too often, pollution disproportionately impacts indigenous communities, people of color, and low-income families. This bill would help to protect such communities by requiring the consideration of cumulative impacts in permitting decisions under the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act. It would require federal agencies to provide early and meaningful community involvement, including tribal representation, under the National Environmental Policy Act when proposing an action affecting an environmental justice community. Additionally, this bill would establish a fund to use revenues from fees on oil, gas, and coal industries to support communities and workers as they transition away from greenhouse gas-dependent economies.

Furthermore, this bill emphasizes the need for equitable access to the outdoors and nature, which provides countless benefits to underserved communities. Studies show that a thriving environment is invaluable for emotional, mental, and physical health, and Covid-19 has provided a real-world case study of the importance of getting outdoors in a safe and clean environment. This bill would prioritize projects that create access to parks and recreational opportunities in urban areas. This bill would also authorize \$75 million annually for grants to support research, program development, and implementation of projects to improve environmental and public health issues in environmental justice communities.

This legislation would benefit millions of residents in the Delaware River watershed by ensuring equal protection from harmful and unnecessary exposure to pollutants in the environment. We must act now to undo the burdens that have been placed on marginalized communities suffering from adverse public health impacts. Ignoring the lack of regulation and enforcement of key environmental protections will perpetuate marginalized communities. Thank you again for your leadership on H.R. 2021, the Environmental Justice for All Act, and we pledge our strong support for this legislation.

Please contact Kelly Knutson at [Kelly.knutson@njudubon.org](mailto:Kelly.knutson@njudubon.org) with any questions or concerns.

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