



February 14, 2022

The Honorable Raul Grijalva
Chairman
Natural Resources Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Bruce Westerman
Ranking Member
Natural Resources Committee
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Letter for the Record on the Environmental Justice for All Act

Dear Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Westerman:

On behalf of the Natural Resources Defense Council and our members, we write to express strong support for the Environmental Justice for All Act (H.R. 2021). We urge committee members to advance this important legislation quickly to begin remedying the long history of environmental racism and injustice, and cumulative and disproportionate health and environmental impacts, that affects communities of color, low-income communities, and Native/Indigenous nations and communities, across the country.

We support this legislation as aligned with NRDC's mission and values, which are to address the global environmental and climate crises through actions that are rooted in justice and that reduce historic and persistent inequities in health, socio-economic security, and human well-being.

We underscore that this landmark bill has been developed in close partnership with leaders in the environmental justice movement. The extensive public input process that informed the Act's creation has produced legislation uniquely influenced by the peoples and communities affected by those it seeks to help. Accordingly, the Environmental Justice for All Act recognizes that meaningfully improving the lives of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color requires transformative change led by those on the frontlines.

We strongly support the Act's central elements, which are important steps toward remedying a long legacy of harm, and ensuring the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people—regardless of color, culture, national origin, or income—with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of health and environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Among the foundational actions provided by the Environmental Justice for All Act is the strengthening of the National Environmental Policy Act to ensure that communities have a meaningful opportunity to engage in NEPA processes that will impact them.

Another significant aspect of the Environmental Justice for All Act is the requirement that federal agencies consider cumulative impacts in Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act permitting

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decisions. The failure to consider cumulative impacts is a longstanding and egregious oversight in environmental regulation and policymaking. It ignores the lived reality of frontline communities, who often face multiple environmental threats at once, along with social stressors such as racial discrimination, historical trauma, and reduced access to material resources. It ignores the science that shows that the risks from environmental pollution are heightened precisely when a person or community faces multiple threats and stressors. Accounting for cumulative impacts is fundamental to reducing inequities and ensuring that additional burdens are not heaped upon those already experiencing disproportionate environmental and social vulnerability.

Importantly, the Environmental Justice for All Act also strengthens the Civil Rights Act to permit private citizens and organizations facing discrimination to seek legal remedies. Providing this recourse will help make progress toward correcting the unequal pollution burden and stark environmental health disparities that frontline communities experience due to historic and ongoing structural discrimination.

Finally, we wish to underscore that the Environmental Justice for All Act is ambitious because it must be. It responds to the scale of challenges frontline communities face every day in their fight for clean air, clean water, and a healthy and safe environment. It is a long overdue correction to our nation's failed chemical management policies, and the cumulative hazards and disproportionate harms that have resulted for communities of color, low-income communities, and Native/Indigenous communities. We urge the Committee, and any other committees with jurisdiction over this legislation, to begin to correct these injustices and address this legacy of harm, by promptly passing the bill out of Committee and sending it on to the full House of Representatives. NRDC looks forward to working with you, the rest of the Committee, and environmental justice advocates to move this legislation forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Melissa Lin Perrella". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Melissa" being more prominent.

Melissa Lin Perrella
Chief Equity & Justice Officer
Environment, Equity & Justice Center