



February 10, 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

Dear Chairman Grijalva and Ranking Member Westerman:

Our organization writes to offer our 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.

The Children's Environmental Health Network (CEHN) supports this legislation because it is aligned with our mission and values -- to protect the developing child from environmental health hazards and promote a healthier environment.

Decades of research and evidence, and the many, many testimonies of the impacted people and communities themselves, have documented a history of cumulative and disproportionate chemical hazards and impacts imposed on communities of color, low-income communities, and Native/Indigenous communities. These affected peoples and communities have themselves developed and demanded solutions to these injustices and harms for some time. The extensive public input process that informed the Act's creation reflects this history and evidence and has produced legislation uniquely influenced by the people and communities it seeks to help.

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.

These urgently needed policy improvements include:

- Requiring federal agencies to consider cumulative health impacts under the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act in making permitting decisions and ensuring that permits are only issued when there is a reasonable certainty of no harm to human health.
- Providing \$75 million in annual grants for research and program development to reduce health disparities; and improve public health in environmental justice communities.
- Strengthening the Civil Rights Act to permit private citizens and organizations facing discrimination to seek legal remedies.
- Creating an energy transition economic development assistance fund – paid for through new fees on oil, gas, and coal companies – to support communities and workers as they transition away from greenhouse gas-dependent economies.
- Strengthening the National Environmental Policy Act to ensure that communities have a meaningful opportunity to engage in NEPA processes that will impact them.

The Environmental Justice for All Act 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 have a moral imperative to protect our most vulnerable, our children – children of today as well future generations. 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.

Respectfully submitted by:

Nsedu Obot Witherspoon, MPH
Executive Director
Children's Environmental Health Network