

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 22, 2024

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
Chair
Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Merkley and Ranking Member Murkowski:

As you develop the FY2025 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, we write to emphasize the critical importance of increased funding for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) and other agencies within your Subcommittee's jurisdiction. President Biden has elevated environmental justice to a central position in his administration's agenda. We applaud this focus and recognize that sustained and historic investments in environmental justice initiatives across agencies such as EPA and CEQ are essential for achieving the President's Justice40 objectives. By funding EPA's environmental justice efforts at or above the President's budget request, Congress can take meaningful steps toward rectifying historical disinvestments in low-income communities, communities of color and Tribal communities.

Specifically, we urge you and your colleagues to appropriate funds that meet or exceed the \$10.994 billion requested for EPA in President Biden's FY2025 Budget. This includes the \$1.5 billion proposed to support environmental justice initiatives and full funding for all of the various technical assistance programs at EPA to help communities across the country. We also ask that the Committee revert to the FY2023 environmental justice language that includes requirements for the Agency to carry out these initiatives, specifically the need to restore the inclusion of the word "implementation."

Over the past five decades, extensive research has consistently demonstrated that low-income communities, communities of color and Tribal communities face higher risks of exposure to pollution and other environmental hazards. These communities rely on EPA to develop and enforce crucial regulations from the Safe Drinking Water Act, Clean Water Act, Clean Air Act and Toxic Substances Control Act to protect their citizens. EPA plays a vital role in ensuring that resources from transformative legislation like the Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act (IIJA) reach these communities, cities and states to rebuild, restore and revitalize the nation.

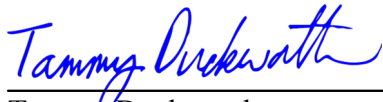
In addition to advocating for full support of EPA grant programs outlined in the President's Budget Request, we strongly urge the Appropriations Committee to fully fund or exceed the President's budget request for the activities by EPA's Office of Environmental Justice, External Civil Rights Compliance Office and the Office of General Counsel.

Additionally, we urge increased appropriations in FY2025 to supplement income from Superfund taxes to the Superfund program reinstated by the IRA and IIJA. Despite the program's vital role in communities, the program faced one of the largest cuts in FY2024 discretionary appropriations. This cut in funding jeopardizes efforts to clean up 84 toxic waste sites and protect the 900,000 people living nearby. Remediation of Superfund sites is crucial for environmental justice and Tribal communities grappling with the public health crisis caused by legacy pollution.

We also endorse funding for the CEQ's Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST), which includes resources for personnel to sustain and annually update the tool. Improving the CEJST will enable the CEQ to fill existing data gaps, such as information deficiencies regarding U.S. territories, and enhance the tool's capacity to furnish valuable insights to Federal agencies. Finally, we urge you to continue rejecting all harmful riders that may be proposed during the FY2025 appropriations process.

Thank you for your consideration of our request to support funding for environmental justice across government agencies.

Sincerely,



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



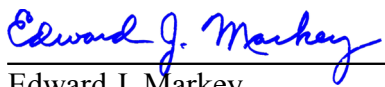
Peter Welch
United States Senator



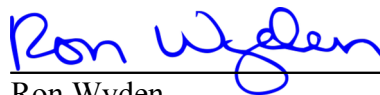
Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



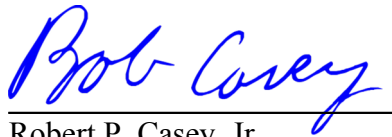
Ron Wyden
United States Senator



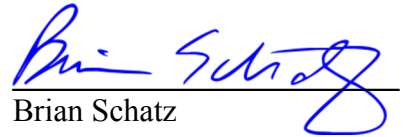
Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



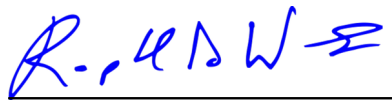
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Raphael Warnock
United States Senator