



July XX, 2020

Dear Representative:

The undersigned members of the Choose Clean Water Coalition, the Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed, and the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition urge you to cosponsor the Environmental Justice For All Act (H.R.5986). Together, our coalitions represent more than 500 organizations across the Chesapeake Bay, Delaware River, and Great Lakes watersheds, which covers more than 370,000 square miles and is home to over 60 million residents across 13 states and the District of Columbia.

In the midst of a public health crisis, the need for clean air and clean water is stronger than ever. 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 Baltimore, 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 restore the right for individuals to bring actions under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 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, education, outreach, development, and implementation of projects to address environmental and public health issues in environmental justice communities.

This legislation would benefit millions of residents in the Chesapeake Bay and Delaware River watersheds 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 for considering cosponsorship of H.R. 5986, the Environmental Justice For All Act.

Please contact Peter J. Marx at [peter@choosecleanwater.org](mailto:peter@choosecleanwater.org) with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,