



April 20, 2022

The Honorable Chellie Pingree
Chair
House Appropriations Subcommittee
on Interior, Environment, and Related
Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

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

The Honorable David Joyce
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Subcommittee
on Interior, Environment, and Related
Agencies
Washington, DC 20515

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

Dear Chairwoman Pingree, Chair Merkley, Ranking Members Joyce and Murkowski,

The undersigned health organizations urge you to increase funding for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to \$11.9 billion in the fiscal year 2023 (FY23) Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations bill. EPA programs save lives and safeguard health, including by improving air quality. From air monitoring networks to pollution standards, every action the agency takes has the potential to impact health. Our organizations and the constituencies we represent call on you to ensure those impacts are positive, effective and widespread by increasing EPA's budget to a more adequate level.

EPA's budget and workforce have remained relatively stagnant for the past 10 fiscal years, but the need for the air quality work that EPA provides remains high.¹ Since the enactment of the Clean Air Act over fifty years ago, EPA has led the successful charge to ensure cleaner air and less pollution, but that work is not finished: health is still at risk from air pollution as well as climate change. The American Lung Association's "State of the Air" 2021 report found that more than 4 in 10 Americans are breathing in unhealthy levels of air pollution. Climate change is

¹ "EPA's Budget and Spending." EPA, Environmental Protection Agency, <https://www.epa.gov/planandbudget/budget>.

already undoing some of the progress the nation has made to clean up air pollution, with record high temperatures leading to the formation of more ground-level ozone pollution or smog and more frequent and intense wildfires that send smoke and soot across the country.

We support the President's FY23 budget request of \$11.9 billion for EPA. Within the Agency, there are a number of air-focused programs providing critical public health programs that must receive more adequate investment. The programs included in this letter is not an exhaustive list but represents key priorities of the undersigned health groups.

Clean Air Program

The work conducted under the Clean Air and Climate program protects people from the impacts of air pollution, improves health and saves lives. This program assists states, Tribes and localities with resources and support to help meet federal air quality standards. Activities like testing vehicles for emissions levels and the reduction of carbon, methane and other climate pollutants are also funded by this program. **Please provide at least \$705.5 million for EPA's Clean Air Program.**

Categorical Grants for State, Local and Tribal Air Monitoring

State, local and Tribal air agencies receive grants from EPA to help maintain their air monitoring networks. When this funding started, the intention was to fund a majority of participating air agency budgets. With time, however, this funding has failed to cover the costs of adequately maintaining and improving air monitors. This funding is crucial to informing the public on any air quality risks to their health and in identifying areas that are most in need of pollution cleanup. After surveying their members, the National Association of Clean Air Agencies recently said that in order to adequately operate the nation's air quality monitoring networks, increases in federal funds are needed². **Please provide \$500 million for State and Local Air Quality Management and \$33 million for Tribal Air Quality Management.**

Diesel Emissions Reduction Grant Program

The Diesel Emissions Reduction (DERA) Grant program continues to be a cost-effective program that enjoys bipartisan support. According to a 2019 EPA report, every \$1 spent on DERA yields up to \$30 in health benefits. Still though, there are millions of dirty diesel engines that are polluting communities – particularly low-income areas and communities of color. **Please provide \$150 million for DERA grants.**

Environmental Justice Enforcement

Far too many communities are still waiting on the promise of clean air. The American Lung Association's "State of the Air" 2021 report found that people of color are three times more likely than white people to live in areas with the unhealthiest air. The Administration and Congress have made large promises on righting environmental injustices. Adequately funding EPA to hold polluters accountable to cleaning up the air in disadvantaged communities is

² National Association of Clean Air Agencies FY 2023 Funding One Pager February 2022
<https://www.4cleanair.org/wp-content/uploads/NACAA-FY-2023-Funding-One-Pager-February-2022-2.pdf>

necessary to meet those promises. **Please provide at least \$294.9 million for enforcing environmental justice commitments.**

Wildfires

Wildfires unfortunately are no longer a rare occurrence and in fact, wildfire smoke is becoming an increasingly urgent threat to health. There currently is no centralized federal effort that works to answer the questions around how best to protect health from wildfire smoke. EPA's work to protect health from poor air quality makes the agency a good fit for this program. The President's FY23 budget request included a program that health groups like the American Thoracic Society and American Lung Association have been advocating for. Under this program, EPA would lead work with the U.S. Forest Service to research the health impacts of wildfire smoke and offer answers to the questions communities face when wildfire smoke degrades the air around them. **Please provide \$15 million for a new program at EPA, in collaboration with the U.S. Forest Service, to study the health impacts of wildfire smoke.**

EPA's work is critical in protecting health from poor air quality and addressing the sources of both air and climate pollution. Appropriately funding the agency to complete this work is a responsibility we urge Congress to meet. Please support \$11.9 billion in funding to EPA in Fiscal Year 2023.

Sincerely,

Allergy & Asthma Network
Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments
American Lung Association
American Psychological Association
American Public Health Association
American Thoracic Society
Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
Children's Environmental Health Network
Climate for Health from ecoAmerica
Climate Psychiatry Alliance
Health Care Without Harm
Medical Students for a Sustainable Future
National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
National Environmental Health Association
National League for Nursing
Physicians for Social Responsibility
The Society of Thoracic Surgeons