

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 18, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States of America
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

With deadly heat, dangerous floods, rising seas, and devastating wildfires — including those that ravaged Maui last month — the climate crisis demands a whole-of-government response at an unprecedented scale. Following up on your earlier commitments, existing legislation, and the demands from young people across the nation, we urge you to issue an Executive Order formally establishing a Civilian Climate Corps initiative to work on key conservation and climate priorities. By leveraging the historic climate funding secured during your Administration, using existing authorities, and coordinating across AmeriCorps and other relevant federal agencies, your Administration can create a federal Civilian Climate Corps that unites its members in an effort to fight climate change, build community resilience, support environmental justice, and develop career pathways to good-paying union jobs focused on climate resilience and a clean economy. As members of Congress who have led on various legislative proposals for Civilian Climate and Conservation Corps, we support your Administration in taking executive action and will continue to fight for additional resources from Congress.

The climate and clean community investments in the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (IIJA), the *American Rescue Plan Act* (ARPA), and the *Inflation Reduction Act* (IRA) have the potential to fund transformative climate, energy, and resilience projects across the country. As you called for in the earlier Executive Order 14008 “*Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad*,” the United States needs the creation of a Civilian Climate Corps “to mobilize the next generation of conservation and resilience workers and maximize the creation of accessible training opportunities and good jobs.”¹ Your Build Back Better plan called for “a new Civilian Climate Corps:” a “diverse new workforce” that “will conserve our public lands, bolster community resilience, and address the changing climate, all while putting good-paying union jobs within reach for more Americans.”² This vision of a Civilian Climate Corps is broadly popular. Polling shows 63 percent of Americans favor the creation of a Civilian Climate Corps.³

¹ Exec. Order No. 14,008

² President Biden Announces the Build Back Better Framework. The White House Briefing Room (October 28, 2021) www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/10/28/president-biden-announces-the-build-back-better-framework/.

³ Further, 58 percent of voters under 45 support using executive action to create the Civilian Climate Corps. “A Civilian Climate Corps Is Broadly Popular.” Data for Progress (January 5, 2023) www.dataforprogress.org/blog/2023/1/5/a-civilian-climate-corps-is-broadly-popular.

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In the absence of federal action, some state leaders are already moving forward with similar efforts to respond to communities' climate and resilience needs, with multiple states establishing successful climate corps programs akin to a Civilian Climate Corps. While this is promising, we need a national and united effort. A central coordinating body, overseen by the White House, will be essential to create a successful and cohesive Civilian Climate Corps. Through interagency collaboration, as well as coordination with state climate corps, other state entities, and local non-profit organizations, your Administration can realize the vision of a Civilian Climate Corps that establishes a unified front in the face of climate change—one that looks like America, serves America, and puts good-paying union jobs within reach for more young adults.

In order to ensure that a broad range of climate and resilience programs can take advantage of the benefits of a Civilian Climate Corps, this collaboration should involve a broad array of federal agencies including, but not limited to, AmeriCorps, the Department of Interior (DOI), the Department of Labor (DOL), the Department of Transportation (DOT), the Department of Energy (DOE), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the United States Geological Survey (USGS), the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Department of Education (ED), and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). By entering into national agreements with AmeriCorps and enabling the use of their funding for AmeriCorps programming, a coordinated interagency effort would strengthen individual agencies' capabilities to respond to the climate crisis and deploy resources to complete projects.

As your Administration works to address the intersecting challenges of the present—fighting climate change, advancing environmental justice, promoting equity, and strengthening the economy—we ask that you create a partnership through executive action that supports the following principles:

- **The Civilian Climate Corps must take a whole-of-government approach to the climate crisis.** Through the IIJA, ARPA, and IRA, Congress has provided funding across agencies to combat climate change and support community resilience, particularly in environmental justice communities. Supported by IRA funding alone, the Civilian Climate Corps would be well poised to augment deployment efforts for funding pools such as DOE energy efficiency programs, USFS Urban and Community Forestry Program, EPA Environmental and Climate Justice Program, USDA and DOI wildfire risk reduction and federal park conservation and maintenance projects, and NOAA coastal and marine restoration programs. DOL programs, such as YouthBuild, Job Corps, and Re-Entry Opportunities should also be incorporated into the proposed Civilian Climate Corps approach. The Administration should ensure that the Civilian Climate Corps can work on a wide variety of eligible intersectional projects, such as clean energy

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deployment, urban greening, disaster preparedness, education and outreach, weatherization, and energy efficiency projects.

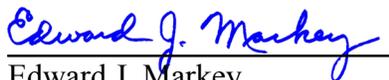
- **The Civilian Climate Corps must prioritize equity in the communities it serves and the Corps members it trains.** The Civilian Climate Corps should look like America and provide opportunities for all Americans; especially those from historically marginalized groups. It must approach all activities through an equity lens, prioritizing communities historically affected by environmental racism and those populations most harmed by societal inequities, and must be accessible to Tribal members and to people of all socioeconomic backgrounds. The Civilian Climate Corps should also expand existing conservation employment programs tailored to individuals with disabilities, work to accommodate non-native English speakers and individuals with language barriers, ensure immigration status is not a barrier to participation, create more opportunities for participation from youth from underserved backgrounds, and proactively engage students at trade schools, minority serving institutions (MSIs), and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) To achieve this, the Civilian Climate Corps should ensure data is collected on participants and projects to ensure environmental justice outcomes.
- **The Civilian Climate Corps must provide a pathway to long-term employment through good-paying union jobs.** By working with labor organizations, pre-apprenticeship programs, labor management partnerships, workforce development boards, and other organizations, the Civilian Climate Corps should provide pathways to high-quality apprenticeships and careers in public, private, and nonprofit sectors that lead to long-term, good-quality, union jobs. This training will help build the workforce of the future, and should be compensated, with a living and competitive wage and health, education, and other wrap-around supports. DOL's expertise will be critical in developing effective training programs that are aligned with the Biden-Harris administration's strong commitments to American union workers. Importantly, the Civilian Climate Corps must not displace skilled, unionized workers ready to compete for positions in the workforce today, and should instead help Corpsmembers get hands-on experience through the Civilian Climate Corps and put on pathways to these skilled positions. To ensure this, the Civilian Climate Corps will abide by the current non-displacement regulation governing the Corporation for National and Community Service, and as such should be targeted to complement, rather than compete with, union labor. The tracking of post-service data, along with demographic data, will be important to achieving this outcome.
- **The Civilian Climate Corps must center the needs and leadership of local communities in order to achieve its national mission.** The Civilian Climate Corps should work in partnership with State, local, Tribal, and territorial governments and community-based nonprofit organizations to advance locally designed projects and benefit from communities' expertise and leadership. To this end, there must be ongoing dialogues with frontline groups before, during, and after projects are completed to ensure

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that benefits are maximized and going to members of the community. Additionally, it is important to enable more pathways to partner with the Civilian Climate Corps, such as increasing technical assistance and waiving match funds, especially for new or small nonprofits in underserved areas. This will improve climate resilience-driven economic opportunities in urban and rural communities, particularly frontline communities.

These tenets—which would also benefit AmeriCorps service members more broadly— are critical to the productivity, effectiveness, and the humanity of the Civilian Climate Corps. As we collectively take bold action to mitigate and respond to climate change, we urge you to issue an Executive Order to establish a federal Civilian Climate Corps so we can prepare a whole generation of workers for good-paying, dignified, union jobs, and build the workforce we need for the robust green economy of tomorrow. We look forward to continuing to partner on solutions to the climate crisis, and will keep working together in Congress on our complementary legislative proposals to deliver additional funding and build upon this vision of a robust, coordinated, and inspirational Civilian Climate Corps.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



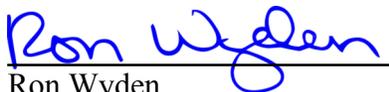
Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress



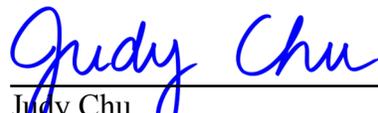
Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Joe Neguse
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Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Judy Chu
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Bernard Sanders
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Charles E. Schumer
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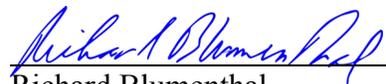
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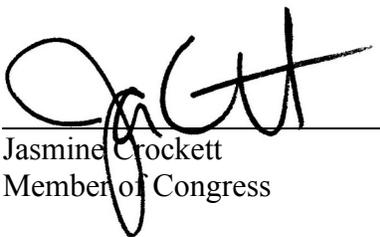
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Eleanor Holmes Norton
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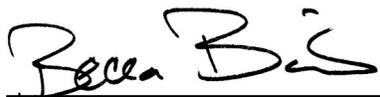
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James P. McGovern
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Maxwell Alejandro Frost
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