

August 23, 2021

Dear Member of Congress:

As Black Church leaders, we have seen for ourselves how climate change hits African American communities in a particularly harsh way, whether through severe weather events like Hurricane Katrina or through the negative impact on air and water quality that disproportionately affects Black Americans. Right now, justice demands a solicitous effort by Congress to help Black communities become more resilient and to correct the injustices that made them vulnerable and voiceless in the first place.

As we recover from the pandemic and look towards investment in infrastructure we know that any such policy must address climate change and be built on justice and equity. As leaders in the Black Church, we urge you to acknowledge the climate-related suffering of Black Americans and enact infrastructure and energy policy that:

- Offsets the disproportionate impact of climate change on Black communities;
- Helps Black communities become more climate resilient;
- Provides the financial support needed to equip Black communities for a major energy transition, so they are not left behind to suffer further harm and injury; and
- Respects subsidiarity by including Black people in the development and implementation of solutions in their own communities.

We urge you to invest in climate solutions in the budget reconciliation package that avoid watered-down compromises that don't care for the people you are called to serve. The question of *how* we invest in climate friendly infrastructure is just as important as the question of *whether* to invest at all.

We are grateful for your commitment to reimagine and rebuild our economy in this critical moment in our nation's history. When faced with a crisis such as the one brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, we must hear and answer the cry of those impacted the most instead of seeking to preserve the status quo at all costs. The effort on your part to create and negotiate bold infrastructure and energy policy gives us great hope that our country is on the path to a different future that includes everyone.

Sincerely,

Rev. Debra Smoot, Saint Matthew AME Church, Beckley
Elder Alton Dillard, Sr., Bethel AME, Parkersburg
Rev. Samuel Ware, Saint Peters AME, Weirton
Rev. John Sylvia, Saint Paul AME, Charleston
Rev. Georgia Morrow, Greater Saint Paul AME, Morgantown
Rev. LeYvette Taylor, Wayman AME, Wheeling
Rev. Carolyn Harrisonton, Allen Chapel AME, Charleston
Rev. Demetrius Greer, Henderson Chapel AME, Wellsburg
Rev. Oliver Banks, Young Chapel AME, Huntington
Rev. Marsha Phillips, Saint Mark AME, Lester
Rev. Rahsaan Armand, Mt Zion MBC, Clarksburg

Rev. Kevin Carpenter, Mt Zion Baptist, Fairmont
Rev. Wesley Dobbs, Morning Star Baptist, Fairmont
Rev. Melvin Rippy, Macedonia Baptist, Wheeling
Rev. Willie Nevells, Morning Star Baptist, Weirton
Rev. Kathie Holland, New Vision Baptist, White Sulpher Springs
Rev. Shawn Woods, Manantha Baptist, Madison
Rev. Emanuel Heyliger, Ferguson Memorial Baptist, Dunbar
Rev. Walter Leach, Sr., St Paul Baptist, Beckley
Rev. Letari Thompson, Metropolitan Baptist, Charleston
Rev. Vincent Coleman, Bethlehem Baptist, Chesapeake
Rev. James C. Jackson, Sr., Levi First Missionary Baptist Church, Chesapeake
Dr. Vincent W. Coleman, Bethlehem Missionary Baptist Church, Chesapeake
Rev. Wesley A. Dobbs, Morning Star Baptist Church, Fairmont
Rev. William R. Stevens, West Virginia Baptist State Congress, Chesapeake
Rev. Reginald Hill, Antioch Missionary Baptist Church, Huntington
Reverend Roy E. Terry, Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, Huntington
Rev. Frank Jones, Cole Street Baptist Church, Logan
Pastor Rudy McAllister, Mount Olive Baptist Church, Weirton
Rev. Willie L. Nevels, Morning Star Baptist Church, Wheeling
Rev. Frank Jones, Second Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church, Williamson