

October 20, 2021

The Honorable Senator Joe Manchin
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Manchin:

As religious leaders and people of faith in West Virginia we believe that we are called to speak up for those who are suffering and for those whose voices are not heard. It is in this spirit that we write in solidarity with those who are hit hardest by the effects of climate change, whether through severe weather events or through worsening air and water quality. We know that we have a moral responsibility to do what it takes to make these communities more climate resilient and to right the wrongs that made them vulnerable in the first place.

As we recover from the pandemic and look towards rebuilding, we must address climate change and seek to correct environmental injustice in our country. We urge you to pass legislation through the budget reconciliation process that achieves 100% renewable, pollution-free electricity by 2035, while also expanding investments in wind and solar power. As religious leaders, we urge you to acknowledge the suffering caused by climate change by enacting big and bold investments in:

- clean, renewable energy to modernize our electric grid
- electric vehicles, charging infrastructure and expanding public transit to electrify transportation and connect communities
- energy efficiency and affordable, energy-efficient housing

It is urgent that you enact legislation that offsets the disproportionate impact of climate change on frontline communities and helps those communities most vulnerable to climate-related weather events become more climate resilient. The budget reconciliation package should direct a significant portion of investments to Black, Indigenous, people of color and low-income communities to offset the unequal burden of pollution they have shouldered. In addressing the climate crisis, any legislation should provide the financial support needed to equip all communities for a major energy transition so they no one is left behind to suffer further harm and injury.

When faced with a crisis, we are forced to decide whether or not we will hear and answer the cry of those most impacted or whether we would rather preserve the status quo at all costs. Your work to create and negotiate a bold reconciliation package centered on climate and justice is a sign that we are not afraid of change in favor of a better future that includes everyone. We pray

for your commitment to reimagining and rebuilding our society in this critical moment in our nation's history.

Sincerely,

Rev. Jeff Allen
Executive Director
West Virginia Council of Churches

Jean Ambrose
Clerk of Mid Ohio Valley Friends Meeting
Parkersburg

Elizabeth Bailes
West Virginia Conference of United Methodist Women
Ravenswood

Ibtesam Barazi
Vice President
Islamic Association of West Virginia

Donna Becher
Past Chair, Catholic Committee of Appalachia and Member, Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church
South Charleston

Rev. Robin Blakeman,
WV Interfaith Power and Light Steering Committee
Huntington

Elizabeth Brunello
American Friends Service Committee
Charleston

Rev. Caitlin Cotter Coillberg
Unitarian Universalist
Charleston

Sue DeVall
West Virginia Interfaith Power & Light Steering Committee
Shepherdstown

Rev. Ronald English
Former Pastor, First Baptist Church of Charleston
Restorative Justice Facilitator, American Friends Service Committee
Charleston

Martha Hill
Justice and Advocacy Chair, West Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church
Charleston

Amy Jo Hutchinson
Faith Democracy
Wheeling

Angela Iafrate
Catholic Committee of Appalachia-West Virginia
Parkersburg

Karan Ireland
Blessed Sacrament Parish
Charleston

Bishop Michie Klusmeyer
Diocese of West Virginia
The Episcopal Church

Rev. William Myers
First Presbyterian Church
Charleston

Dr. Leah Rampy
Church of the Wild Two Rivers
Shepherdstown

Lida Shepherd
American Friends Service Committee Economic Justice Project
Charleston

Rev. Roberta Smith
President
Charleston Black Ministerial Alliance
Charleston

Rich Stonestreet
Co-Coordinator
Catholics for a Sustainable Economy

Rabbi Victor Ureck
B'nai Jacob Synagogue
Charleston

Jennifer Wells
Board President
National Association of Social Workers and St. Peter Claver Catholic Church
Huntington

Rick Wilson
American Friends Service Committee
Milton

Loretta Young
Executive Director
Race Matters
Ronceverte