

August 25, 2020

Senator Kamala Harris  
U.S. Senate  
112 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Senator Tammy Duckworth  
U.S. Senate  
524 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Senator Cory Booker  
U.S. Senate  
717 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Raul Grijalva  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1511 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Donal McEachin  
U.S. House of Representatives  
314 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senators Harris, Duckworth, and Booker & Representatives Grijalva and McEachin:

On behalf of First Focus Campaign for Children, a bipartisan children's advocacy organization dedicated to making children and families the priority in federal policy and budget decisions, we are writing to express our thanks and support for the Environmental Justice for All Act (H.R. 5986/S. 4401).

In the fight for racial equity, environmental justice cannot be forgotten nor neglected. This is especially true for the sake of the 13 million children currently living in poverty that are unduly affected by environmental hazards<sup>1</sup>. Children of communities of color and low-income households are disproportionately affected by unsustainable environmental practices such as pollution, redlining, and intentional deinvestment<sup>2</sup>.

Low-income households tend to have more harmful living conditions with “heavily polluting industries, hazardous waste sites, contaminated water and soil, in old housing with deteriorating lead-based paint, [and] in areas with limited access to healthy food”<sup>3</sup>. Thus, they are at higher risk of developing a myriad of health disparities like asthma, cancer, lead poisoning, obesity, and hyperactivity<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup><https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22206190/#:~:text=Children%20living%20in%20poverty%20are,and%20affected%20by%20environmental%20hazards.&text=Poor%20children%20residing%20in%20these,poisoning%2C%20obesity%2C%20and%20hyperactivity>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.harris.senate.gov/news/press-releases/harris-booker-duckworth-introduce-comprehensive-legislation-to-help-achieve-environmental-justice-for-all#:~:text=Specifically%2C%20the%20Environmental%20Justice%20for,Sandoval>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup><https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/22206190/#:~:text=Children%20living%20in%20poverty%20are,and%20affected%20by%20environmental%20hazards.&text=Poor%20children%20residing%20in%20these,poisoning%2C%20obesity%2C%20and%20hyperactivity>

Since the Covid-19 epidemic causes and exasperates respiratory issues, preexisting conditions become even more problematic. Studies suggest harmful environmental exposure result in a higher mortality rate among communities of color who are exposed and infected with Covid-19<sup>5</sup>.

By enacting the Environmental Justice for All Act, communities can be empowered to fight against this environmental injustice. Legal action could be taken against discrimination and ensure equitable access to parks and public outdoor spaces. Workers and communities shifting away from greenhouse gas-centered employment would be supported in their effort to be more environmentally conscious. Additionally, communities would be more educated on the negative effects of harmful environments and how to address them.

The bill will also force federal agencies and larger corporations to further consider the health consequences of their actions. There would be ensured compliance and enforcement to reduce health disparities and improve public health in disadvantaged communities.

Every child has the right to clean air, safe water, and a healthy environment to grow and thrive. This legislation is one step in assuring that right of a sustainable and equitable future to all, regardless of background. We thank you for your leadership on behalf of children and families, and we look forward to working with you to help advance this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bruce Lesley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "L" in "Lesley".

Bruce Lesley  
President

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.natlawreview.com/article/environmental-justice-all-act-introduced-us-senate>