

December 17, 2018

Phil Mendelson  
Chairman  
Council of the District of Columbia  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Chairman Mendelson:

I am writing to you as the DC Council is on the verge of enacting model clean energy legislation that will protect the health of DC residents and move the city to the absolute forefront of climate protection policy.

The Council and Mayor Bowser are to be applauded for forging a truly innovative approach aimed at ensuring the District operates on 100% clean electricity by 2032 and using this decarbonized electricity to transform its transportation system. Electricity and transportation are the largest sources of climate pollution, so taking bold action to address both will place the District in the lead. I was also encouraged to see that the legislation increases energy performance standards for buildings; expands energy efficiency options for low-and moderate-income residents; and provides for workforce training and local hiring.

The bill rightly recognizes that there will be new opportunities created for District residents by passing this legislation. Increasing local solar and expanding transportation electrification and energy efficiency programs provide real opportunities for job creation and economic mobility. This bill makes sure that local residents and businesses will be prepared for this future.

It is exciting – and necessary -- to see this legislation move forward, particularly at a time when the Trump administration refuses to listen to the international scientific community, not to mention its own federal agencies, who are telling us that we need to act boldly and swiftly if we stand any chance to do the right thing on climate.

We are endangering our physical infrastructure, we are endangering our economy, and we are endangering human health. This October, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change - the gold standard of science on the matter – warned us that we are already seeing destructive physical consequences from climate change. In November, the latest volume in the Fourth National Climate Assessment informed us that the economic consequences of a damaged climate to the overall American economy will be like a self-inflicted permanent recession. And this month, the World Health Organization said one of the best ways to improve health around the

world is fighting climate change. The clear takeaway is that we must take holistic action now to avoid even deeper calamity than the worsening storms, droughts, wildfires and floods we are experiencing now. We must do so in a way that moves our entire energy network and all its players in same direction, together.

The Trump administration thumbed its nose at all this evidence and analysis and, instead, sent a delegation to the UN Climate conference in Poland to reinforce its decision to abandon the Paris Climate Agreement.

I have been working at the intersection of human health and climate change for my entire career; and it was my privilege to work for eight years at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and serve as its Administrator under President Obama. I am proud of what we did to protect the climate and our health, including setting our nation on a real path to reduce carbon emissions and drive innovation in transportation, the electric sector and the building sector – it sounds familiar to what the Council is considering. Each of these policies was pursued with scientific rigor, respect for transparency and the legal process.

So, seeing the Council of the District of Columbia on the verge of passing such landmark legislation at this moment in time is both necessary and exciting.

To my fellow policy wonks who may have wanted one provision or another to have been written differently, I say don't lose sight of the victory here. Making it harder for utilities to invest in energy efficiency for low- and moderate-income families wouldn't be innovative -- it would only end up delivering less energy efficiency service to those who really need it. And, channeling long duration contracts to renewables developers isn't as needed as it might once have been. Certainly, withholding support for the overall bill over these sorts of disagreements stands in the way of making great strides forward now with the engagement of a broader energy community – isn't that exactly what the IPCC report told us to do?

As the Trump Administration sticks its head in the ground, leaders in states and cities – like the district – can keep driving our clean energy revolution forward.

Sincerely,

Gina McCarthy

E.P.A. administrator from 2013 to 2017

cc

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David Grosso  
At-Large Councilmember

Elissa Silverman  
At-Large Councilmember

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