To: Speaker Pelosi and Leader Schumer  
CC: President Biden  
From: 120 local, state, regional and national organizations representing labor, conservation, young people, national service, and the movements for racial, economic, and climate justice.  
Date: September 10, 2021

We Need a Big, Bold Civilian Climate Corps

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader Schumer,

We the undersigned organizations write to express our support for a bold, ambitious Civilian Climate Corps (CCC) that would put young Americans to work serving their communities and tackling the climate crisis. We encourage you to move swiftly to pass the full $3.5 trillion reconciliation package, including a robust CCC. We are grateful to the Senate for its strong commitment to the CCC of at least $30B and urge you to maintain that level of funding in the reconciliation bill. 

President Biden recognized the potential of a Civilian Climate Corps when he included it in his American Jobs Plan and FY2022 budget. Tapping into enthusiasm for the sweeping social programs of the New Deal era, the possibility of a modern CCC remains one of the most popular, exciting components of the AJP. Americans want the opportunity to serve their communities, tackle the most pressing threat facing our country, and earn family-sustaining wages. The CCC would let them do so, through national service work that ranges from installing solar panels to supporting disaster resilience and recovery. With high-road service and workforce development standards and strong environmental justice requirements, an ambitious Climate Corps would train a generation of climate leaders, kickstart the climate workforce mobilization, and directly combat systemic racial injustice by prioritizing resources and job creation in underserved communities. Since the President’s announcement, more than 80 members of Congress have come out in support of this very vision.

Young voters widely support this vision. Half of all voters under 45 say they would consider joining the Climate Corps if a job was available to them. The new CCC would provide unprecedented economic opportunities to those young Americans, who are unemployed at nearly double the rate of the total population. Like the COVID recovery package’s $1,400 checks, putting young people into high-quality national service positions to tackle climate change and on pathways to good-paying, union jobs would make precisely the kind of visible policy change in Americans’ lives that can demonstrate the power of government to serve its people.

The federal government must be ambitious to take on this task. AmeriCorps and the federal agencies, state service commissions, conservation corps, and other partners that it works with
through its existing interagency agreements provide a ready-made infrastructure upon which the CCC can be built. They have the necessary authorities and experience to implement the CCC, as well as the relationships at the state and local level to ensure that its efforts are driven by communities’ needs. Additionally, it is critical that the CCC set corpsmembers up for success during and after their year of service— and that this holds true across all national service programs. This means providing a living allowance of at least the equivalent of $15/hour for all corpsmembers, plus healthcare, childcare, and educational benefits that would help corpsmembers and their families thrive. Corpsmembers should also receive technical and vocational training during their service, including through pre-apprenticeships in partnership with local union chapters, to open pathways to stable careers in the clean economy.

As such, we are calling for the majority of $30 billion of funding designated for the CCC to be directed towards AmeriCorps to pay for living allowances, benefits, educational awards, and training of all Civilian Climate Corps members, as well as equally raising the benefits of all AmeriCorps programs to make national service more accessible to all people. This will provide the infrastructure upon which the Administration can build a big, bold CCC with complementary funding for, and participation of, a wide array of government agencies including the Departments of Interior, Agriculture, Housing and Urban Development, Energy, and Transportation and the Environmental Protection Agency.

The Civilian Climate Corps must also advance environmental justice and correct the racially exclusionary practices of the original Civilian Conservation Corps. It must be a viable opportunity for all young Americans, and it must address the disproportionate burden on communities of color across the country from the overlapping harms of toxic pollution, economic disinvestment, and other structural inequities. The CCC can be a force to directly combat those inequities and support these communities.

To that end, any new CCC program should direct half of corps investments into overburdened communities, and recruit at least half of its corpsmembers from those same places. The program should also ensure gender equity, provide opportunities for corpsmembers of a range of ages and abilities, give corpsmembers opportunities regardless of immigration status, protect tribal sovereignty, and more. And by prioritizing local recruitment and engaging in local consultation on project design and implementation the CCC can ensure that its climate action is sustainably driven from the bottom-up, rather than top-down and targeted at impactful projects.

The Civilian Climate Corps is an opportunity to clearly demonstrate the commitment and power of the federal government to mobilize a workforce to stop the climate crisis. As you are finalizing reconciliation text and funding amounts, we, the undersigned groups, urge you to direct
at least $30 billion towards this historic and popular program that centers job creation, environmental justice, and direct community investment.

Sincerely,

America’s Service Commissions
American Society of Landscape Architects
Blue America
Build-back-fossil-free
Climate Justice Alliance
Climate Reality Project
CODEPINK
Common Defense
Conservation Lands Foundation
Data for Progress
Defend Our Future
DNC Environment and Climate Crisis Council
Evergreen Action
Greenpeace USA
Indivisible
Our Climate
Our Revolution
People’s Party
Public Citizen
Service Year Alliance
Sierra Club
Sunrise Movement
The Corps Network
198 Methods
2degrees Northampton
350 Bay Area Action
350 Butte County
350 Conejo / San Fernando Valley
350 Eugene
350 MA Berkshires
350 Triangle
4BLM
Alaska Community Action on Toxics
Appalachian Mountain Club
Association of Outdoor Recreation and Education
Avid4 Adventure
Berggruen Institute
Boston Catholic Climate Movement
Broward Soil & Water Conservation District, Seat 4
Courage California
CleanChoice Energy
Climate Action Now
Climate Changemakers
Climate Hawks Vote
Climate Reality Baltimore Area Chapter
Climate Reality Boston Metro Chapter
Climate Reality Project Massachusetts Southcoast
Friends of the Earth US
Green New Deal Network
GreenLatinos
GreenFaith
Indigenous Environmental Network
National Recreation and Park Association
NDN Collective
Union of Concerned Scientists
United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE)
Working Families Party
Zero Hour
Christians For The Mountains
Community Action Works
Cream City Conservation Corps
Dayenu: A Jewish Call to Climate Action
The Enviro Show
ERTC of Holyoke
Extinction Rebellion San Francisco Bay Area
FCCPR Peace Task Force
FracTracker Alliance
Franciscan Action Network
Franklin County Continuing the Political Revolution
Grassroots Global Justice Alliance
Greening Greenfield
Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy
Highest Good
Hispanic Access Foundation
Hometown Action
Indian Orchard Citizens Council
International Marine Mammal Project of Earth
Island Institute
Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement
ktcPLAN
Lead For America
Loudoun Climate Project
Planning Board
Loudoun County Board of Supervisors
Marked By COVID
Mid-Ohio Valley Climate Action
Milwaukee Riverkeeper
Moms Clean Air Force
Mothers Out Front
NC Climate Justice Collective
Neighbor to Neighbor MA
NM Climate Justice
North American Association for Environmental Education
North Parish of North Andover UU Climate Justice Group
Organic Consumers Association
PennFuture
PGF / FYC
Physicians for Social Responsibility Pennsylvania
Protect Our Water Heritage Rights (POWHR)
The Rachel Carson Council
The Shalom Center

Social Justice Commission (Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts)
SOS Outreach
Springfield Climate Justice Coalition
States for Service Coalition
Sunflower Alliance
Sunrise Fairview
Sunrise Knoxville
TOTAGO LLC
Transition Town Media
Traprock Center for Peace & Justice
UCC, Amherst, MA
UnKoch My Campus
US High Speed Rail Association
Washington Trails Association
Wendell State Forest Alliance
Western Mass Climate Action Now