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House of Representatives
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March 20, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Steny Hoyer
Majority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Bobby Scott
Chairman
Committee on Education and Labor

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce

The Honorable Peter A. DeFazio
Chair
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

The Honorable Richard Neal
Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader Hoyer, and Committee Chairs:

Thank you for your swift action to help families and workers in the face of the coronavirus pandemic and resulting economic crisis. Our actions over the next days and months are critical as we enact policies to protect our communities, jumpstart a recovery, and prepare for the future. In responding to this crisis, we must be careful not to exacerbate the ongoing climate crisis. We must strongly oppose misguided or surreptitious attempts to boost polluters at the expense of the public health. Instead, we should look for solutions that can also move us toward a clean energy economy and to a healthier, stronger and more just America. We have a few ideas.

The response to the 2008 recession included critical support for clean energy, which boosted small and medium-size businesses and provided cost-savings to consumers. The growth of clean energy has been an important factor in the economic recovery over the last decade. At the end of 2018, nearly 3.3 million Americans had clean energy jobs in every state in the country.¹ The clean energy sector has driven \$50 billion in annual investments in each of the last five years.² Many of these workers and small businesses are feeling an immediate crunch from the necessary steps taken to protect public health and combat the spread of the coronavirus. Their supply chains are at risk from the global coronavirus response, and the tax equity market that is critical to their financing is shrinking from the economic fallout. Given that much of their work is in

¹ E2, Clean Jobs America 2019, <https://e2.org/reports/clean-jobs-america-2019/>.

² Letter from ACORE to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, March 19, 2020, https://acore.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Renewable-Energy-Sector-Letter-to-Congress-on-the-COVID-19-Pandemic_March-19-2020.pdf.

individual homes and buildings, the economic engine they provide might be overlooked compared to other industries. Our response efforts cannot leave them behind.

While the Select Committee on the Climate Crisis has delayed release of its climate policy recommendations for now, many of our recommendations are important and appropriate for coronavirus response and economic stimulus. The following are a few of the recommendations that could help *immediately*:

- Keep workers on critical jobs supporting resilient power supplies for our hospitals, distributed energy, water/wastewater systems, telecommunications and other critical infrastructure;
- Extend start construction and safe harbor deadlines for renewable energy tax credits;
- Provide a direct pay or refundability option for renewable tax credits;
- Increase federal support for public transit systems so that essential employees can get to work;
- Increase funding for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) as necessary;
- Strengthen supply chains for medical supplies and equipment for extreme weather and climate impacts; and
- Ensure FEMA, states, and local emergency managers have the resources needed to respond to the coronavirus and maintain capabilities to respond to disasters like the Nashville tornadoes and the Utah earthquake.

In addition, any COVID response package should focus on workers and should not provide unlimited bailouts for corporations without addressing known climate risks. We agree with our colleagues in the Senate, who called on congressional leaders to ensure “financial assistance for major airlines and foreign-flagged cruise lines includes reasonable environmental requirements to address pollution from these industries.”³ The Senate bill released by Senate Majority Leader McConnell includes billions for aviation. Congress should consider tying aid to adoption of low carbon fuels, support for greenhouse gas efficiency standards, and/or electrification of ground support equipment at airports.

When the worst of the COVID crisis has passed and America goes back to work, climate solutions can help drive economic recovery. Congress should consider extending investment and production tax credits for clean energy and expanding them to include critical technologies like energy storage. Investing in public transit and electric vehicles would create new jobs and reduce carbon pollution from the transportation sector. Protecting communities at risk from the impacts of climate change and building more resilient communities and infrastructure would spark local economic development and better prepare America for future climate-fueled disasters. Of course, we should also focus recovery efforts on creating high-quality, family-sustaining jobs and overcoming the environmental injustice that many communities suffer to this day.

The Select Committee will provide more ideas soon for ensuring our economic recovery helps return us to prosperity and provides for a future in which young people and future generations

³ Office of Senator Sheldon Whitehouse, March 19, 2020, <https://www.whitehouse.senate.gov/news/release/-whitehouse-senate-democrats-request-requirements-for-airlines-and-cruise-lines-to-address-pollution-in-financial-assistance-package>.

can thrive. In the meantime, we will work with you and the standing committees on the near-term emergency aid package.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact me at (202) 225-4824 or Ana Unruh Cohen, Staff Director for the Select Committee, at (202) 225-1106.

Sincerely,

Kathy Castor
Chair

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Jared Huffman
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