

The Honorable Rodney P. Frelinghuysen
Chairman, Committee on Appropriations
H-305, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member, Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

March XX, 2018

Dear Chairman Frelinghuysen and Ranking Member Lowey:

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) plays a critical role in ensuring that all Americans enjoy clean air and water, and that the health and environmental effects of pollution are minimized. However, the agency cannot execute these functions without robust funding. We strongly oppose President Trump's Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 proposal to slash funding for the EPA, and we urge you to instead increase funding by at least 10 percent over Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 enacted in FY2019, which will help reverse years of underfunding.

Success in the United States should be attainable for all, and no one should have to live with health threats to themselves, their families, or their communities. Unfortunately, such threats disproportionately burden the most marginalized of society, including people of color and low-income and other vulnerable communities. There is nothing more fundamental to the well-being of American families than clean air and water. Sadly, millions of people in our country lack access to these necessities, resulting in poor health outcomes and increased financial burdens for marginalized families that are often struggling to get by.

We stand united in our support of adequately funding the EPA. President Trump's proposal to cut the EPA's budget by \$2.8 billion, combined with the ongoing rollback of critical public health safeguards, would have devastating consequences for all Americans, and especially for marginalized communities across the country. These cuts would eliminate or drastically reduce funds to ensure access to clean air and clean water, address pollution from lead, and clean up contaminated industrial sites, among many other needed programs.

We believe our country has a moral obligation to protect public health and maintain environmental quality—for all our citizens—for this generation and the next.

Our sentiments are supported by the recent findings from the EPA's National Center for Environmental Assessment. According to the study, people of color are more likely to live near refineries and factories and face higher levels of exposure to harmful pollutants such as smog and automobile fumes. The study specifically affirms that non-whites tend to be disproportionately burdened, relative to whites, by environmental health hazards.

The health disparities faced by people of color due to environmental injustice have been widely documented. Nearly half of Latinos and 71 percent of African-Americans live in counties that are consistently in violation of federal standards for air pollution and ground-level ozone. Not only does this intensify susceptibility to asthma attacks and other respiratory illnesses, but it also leads to more emergency room visits and higher death rates.

Despite these stark facts, the administration’s FY19 budget request targets programs that protect all Americans, and marginalized communities in particular. That proposal:

- slashes Environmental Justice enforcement by 70 percent;
- cuts the Superfund program to funding levels below the last year of the Obama administration;
- terminates grants that fight lead poisoning such as the Lead Risk Reduction Program; and
- reduces state, local, and tribal air quality monitoring assistance by nearly a third.

At a time when communities and states are fighting to protect their families’ health and re-develop their economies, the federal government should be funding essential safeguards—not slashing air monitoring protections and cutting back hazardous waste clean-up programs.

Building an America where families can thrive — no matter their zip code — requires a well-funded EPA. We will continue to work together to improve health outcomes of marginalized communities and maintain America’s global leadership on environmental justice matters. We urge you to do the same by rejecting the administration’s budget, and increasing EPA funding.

Sincerely,

Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress

Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

A. Donald McEachin
Member of Congress