



**DC ENVIRONMENTAL
N E T W O R K**

Anacostia Parks and Community Collaborative
Anacostia Riverkeeper • Anacostia Watershed Society
Audubon Naturalist Society • Casey Trees
Center for Biological Diversity • Chesapeake Climate Action
Network Citizens' Climate Lobby DC • Climate Institute
Climate Reality Project-DC • DC Climate Action
DC Consumer Utility Board • DC Environmental Network
DC Voters for Animals • Earthjustice • Empower DC
Friends of the Earth • GRID2.0 • League of Women Voters of DC
Moms Clean Air Force DC Area • Potomac Riverkeeper Network
Sierra Club DC Chapter • Solar United Neighbors
Ward 8 Woods Conservancy • Washington Interfaith Network
Washington Parks & People • Wentworth Green Strategies

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June 2, 2022

Hon. Phil Mendelson (Chair)

Hon. Anita Bonds (At-Large)

Hon. Elissa Silverman (At-Large)

Hon. Robert White (At-Large)

Hon. Christina Henderson (At-Large)

Hon. Brianne K. Nadeau (Ward 1)

Hon. Brooke Pinto (Ward 2)

Hon. Mary M. Cheh (Ward 3)

Hon. Janeese Lewis George (Ward 4)

Hon. Kenyan R. McDuffie (Ward 5)

Hon. Charles Allen (Ward 6)

Hon. Vincent C. Gray (Ward 7)

Hon. Trayon White, Sr. (Ward 8)

Council of the District of Columbia

1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW

Washington, DC 20004

RE: Climate crisis champions needed to speak up and defend funding for equitable and just carbon emission reduction programs.

Council of the District of Columbia:

Last year, during the DC Council's FY22 budget deliberations, DC Council Chairman Phil Mendelson swept \$22 million dollars of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds from critical

and equitable climate crisis programs to help low- and moderate-income residents participate in a clean energy future. The programs included **Solar for All**, **Weatherization**, and **Building Energy Performance Standards**. A promise was made to restore those funds, but they have not yet materialized.

This year, despite the excellent budget advocacy of the DC Council Committee on Transportation and the Environment Chair, Mary Cheh, the Chairman attempted to sweep \$1.38 million of Tree Fund dollars important to neighborhood health and climate crisis mitigation efforts. The advocacy community responded and generated over 600 emails in opposition and the Chairman reversed the sweep. The Committee of the Whole still went forward with sweeps of important funds from Soil Erosion Sediment Control; Pesticide Product Registration; and very important climate crisis Benchmarking Enforcement Funds to support the District's landmark Building Energy Performance Standards (BEPS). But it did not stop here.

Literally at the last hour, just before the May 24th DC Council legislative meeting to vote on the local budget, Chairman Phil Mendelson moved a last-minute amendment to remove climate crisis funds from a program aimed at deep energy retrofits and electrification at District of Columbia Housing Authority (DCHA) properties and put them towards funding the Clean Hands certification legislation--despite the fact that other sources were available to fund that measure. Not one Councilmember, except for Councilmember Cheh, spoke out and voted against the amendment.

These were funds that the environmental community had spent the previous two weeks working to restore after recognizing they had been removed by the Mayor in her FY23 proposed budget.

We worked on this because we care deeply about our planet and our neighbors, and we believe that climate change is an existential threat to us all, so it's vitally important that we invest in efficiency and renewables now. **This is particularly true at DCHA properties, where such investments have the dual benefit of improving living conditions and health measures for vulnerable residents. The benefits of a clean energy future should be available to every District resident.**

Below are some quotes that would seem to indicate many of you feel the same:¹

- "...I will continue to support legislation that protects our environment and reduces the impact of climate change on the District. Our children, and generations to come, deserve to live in a habitable climate. We have only one earth, and I will continue to use my position as Chairman of the D.C. Council to push for environmental protection."² - **DC Council Chairman Phil Mendelson**

¹ We could not find quotes on the climate crisis for Councilmember T. White and Councilmember Anita Bonds.

²<https://www.mendelsonforchairman.com/environment>

- “DC is extremely vulnerable to the impacts of climate change... Storms are expected to be much more intense in coming years and this infrastructure can help mitigate some of the flooding that continuously takes place in those communities. I believe in the Solar for All program and think that it has the potential to be a game changer for low- and moderate-income families to access a renewable energy option for their home.”³ - **Councilmember Christina Henderson, At-Large**
- “While climate change poses an incredible threat to our city, we have the opportunity to tackle this challenge while creating new jobs and building our workforce. As mayor, I will create a green jobs guarantee that will strengthen our workforce while fighting our climate emergency.”⁴ - **Councilmember Robert White, At-Large**
- “We need to be climate resilient...and we shouldn’t rob Peter to pay Paul.”⁵ - **Councilmember Elissa Silverman, At-Large**
- “Air quality impacts quality of life, and one of the things that we know is that communities in urban settings—often communities of color, often communities with lower incomes—have higher rates of asthma and respiratory disease. We know that that’s because of emissions issues in major cities, whether from manufacturing, vehicle emissions, or building usages. What we’ve done in this region is improve standards – making sure vehicle emissions are being managed better, that building operations are more efficient, and that we’re doing everything that we can to protect the health of our residents.”⁶ - **Councilmember Brianne Nadeau, Ward 1**
- “As scientists link extreme weather to climate change, we are reminded with each hurricane, flood, and tornado that we must remain steadfast in our commitment to reducing reliance on fossil fuels and protecting the environment.”⁷ - **Councilmember Brooke Pinto, Ward 2**
- “Climate change is not something in the future. It is now. Our planet is dying.”⁸ - **Councilmember Janeese Lewis George, Ward 4**
- “The path to clean energy is ongoing but lower-income communities and more particularly communities of color “face the harshest consequences of climate change.”⁹ - **Councilmember Kenyan McDuffie, Ward 5**

³<https://www.christinahenderson.org/issues>

⁴<https://robertfordc.com/am/sierra-club-endorses-robert-white-for-mayor/>

⁵ http://archive-media.granicus.com:443/OnDemand/dc/dc_6f3e00bb-571d-4d7d-9b73-d363b57dcfeb.mp4

⁶<https://www.mwcog.org/newsroom/2016/10/12/qa-district-of-columbia-councilmember-brianne-nadeau-region-forward-air-quality-air-quality-data-clean-air-partners/>

⁷<https://www.brookepintodc.com/newsroom/climate-and-sustainability>

⁸<https://www.streetsemsemedia.org/article/councilmember-introduces-green-new-deal-legislation-for-dc/#.Yo4vYKjMKw4>

⁹<https://www.washingtoninformer.com/using-the-sun-to-achieve-clean-energy/>

- "...we have to act now to lower emissions, clean our rivers and air, and take the bold steps needed to meet our energy and sustainability goals. The time is right now..."¹⁰ - **Councilmember Charles Allen, Ward 6**
- "Ensuring the long-term sustainability of our city is about improving lives and opportunity for all our residents," Mayor Gray said. "My Vision for a Sustainable DC is ambitious and means we all need to work together to create One City that is healthy, clean, equitable, and prosperous."¹¹ - **Councilmember Vincent Gray, Ward 7, as Mayor**

We look to our elected Council of the District of Columbia for actions that match their rhetoric. If the District is to meet its climate change commitments, which become increasingly urgent every year, we need strong actions that result in both quickly and significantly reducing greenhouse gas emissions and preparing and adapting District neighborhoods for the worst impacts of the climate crisis.

We need champions who are willing to speak up, defend, and increase the less than 1% of the District's budget that is allocated each year toward reducing carbon emissions.

We need leaders who won't allow this funding to be eroded, and who fight for more—because transitioning to net-zero emissions is a long-term project that requires early investment. Investing now saves the District money later. Solving our urban climate challenges, much like solving the housing crisis, will have significant costs in the coming years and decades.

The District has been a leader in clean, sustainable, and equitable energy, but we can quickly fall behind if we aren't investing in the future. We call on each of you to reflect on your commitment to the statements you made above. We need you to speak up against measures that reduce funding for addressing the climate crisis and consider how you can work more closely and transparently with advocates to increase and protect funding for equitable and just climate change measures in the District.

In the coming weeks, we will reach out to each of you to request a meeting to discuss the District's need to identify long-term funding sources for equitable greenhouse gas reduction and resiliency measures.

Sincerely,

Chris Weiss
DC Environmental Network

Mike Tidwell & Doug Siglin
Chesapeake Climate Action Network

Tim Oberleiton
Earthjustice

Karen Orenstein
Friends of the Earth

¹⁰<https://www.sierraclub.org/dc/sierra-club-issues-early-endorsements-for-environmental-champions-charles-allen-brienne-nadeau>

¹¹<https://doee.dc.gov/release/mayor-vincent-c-gray-releases-vision-sustainable-dc-and-opens-new-anacostia-riverwalk-trai-0>

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