Dear Leader Schumer and Speaker Pelosi:

The undersigned members of the US Chapter of 1t.org urge inclusion of important forest based climate provisions in the Build Back Better Act.

The US Chapter of 1t.org represents a diverse coalition of more than 75 organizations including state and local governments, diverse corporations from Fortune 100 to start-ups, and a wide range of civil society leaders and interests, all working to deliver forest-based climate solutions as part of suite of actions to address climate change. 1t.org US Chapter members have already pledged to conserve, restore, and grow more than 50 billion trees, and to commit billions of dollars in additional supporting actions such as technology, carbon finance, and workforce development.

The Build Back Better Act has the potential to protect and grow our forests in ways that will enhance their climate action contributions. The Build Back Better Act includes absolutely critical investments in wildfire risk reduction through hazardous fuels treatment and vegetative management work that will yield significant carbon benefits. Just as important, for minimal additional investment, a suite of reforestation, innovation, partnerships and climate provisions are estimated to sequester an astounding ~375 million metric tons by 2030 making it a must-have for climate action in this legislation.

Investing in forests for climate action will also enhance their capacity to address other environmental and natural infrastructure needs, such as cleaning our air and water, lowering surface temperatures and energy use, and serving as a home to wildlife. Investments in forests will generate as many as 40 jobs per million dollars invested.

To capture this potential, the reconciliation package should make significant investments to benefit public and privately owned forests, urban and rural.

Specifically, we encourage you to maintain the following priorities in the Build Back Better Act:

Maximize the Climate Potential of our America’s Forests. Increased investment in public and private forests is essential if we are to maintain and expand healthy and resilient forest cover and continue to reap the benefits of forests’ contribution to cleaning our air and water and providing abundant wildlife habitat. Necessary investment includes increased funding to reduce wildfire risk, to improve conservation and easement programs and to provide tax and other incentives for forest owners to increase carbon benefits from forest management. Additionally, expanding tree cover through reforestation and investments in nurseries and seedling production will accelerate the potential for carbon removal from the atmosphere.
Reduce the Carbon Footprint of America’s Built Infrastructure. Expanding the use of low-carbon-footprint building materials, like wood, using material-agnostic goals for reducing embodied carbon and based on independent, scientifically sound life cycle assessments will support rural and urban economies and the environment, while helping the U.S. achieve its climate goals. Increased research investments in life cycle assessment and building code revisions are needed to drive preference for low-carbon-footprint materials.

Putting working forests to work on climate. More than half of America’s forests are in private hands, with the largest share held by family forest owners. We must put our private lands to work on climate with carbon incentives to landowners, including those who have been historically underserved like the members of the Sustainable Forestry and African-American Land Retention Network. This will provide a straightforward way to provide direct payment for landowners to undertake specified carbon-friendly forestry practices.

Invest in Forest Climate Data and Applied Science. All climate investments require good scientific information delivered to the right users and decision makers. This includes baseline forest data through the U.S. Forest Service Forest Inventory and Analysis Program (FIA). Additional investment is needed to enhance the FIA program through means such as remote sensing, and to develop applied scientific information through forest-climate research, such as climate-driven threats to forests as revealed by vulnerability assessments.

Tree and jobs for everyone. Trees are our best natural defense against heat and air pollution, reducing temperatures underneath as much as 45 degrees Fahrenheit, and averting 670,000 incidents of respiratory illness per year. Communities of color have 33 percent less tree canopy, on average, and lower-income communities have 41 percent less. This has life or death consequences as heat deaths continue climbing, already at 12,000 annually today with potential to reach more than 100,000 annually this century. The vital work of planting and caring for trees in high-need neighborhoods is a proven job creator, 25.7 jobs per $1 million invested, according to recent research. Investing in a Civilian Climate Corps will advance all of the work above, from wildfire resilience to Tree Equity. This new CCC will target youth populations most in need of these economic opportunities, including urban youth from BIPOC communities, to build the natural climate solutions workforce of the future.

As representatives of public, private and nonprofit organizations united in support of natural climate solutions we look forward to working with you to realize the full potential of America’s forests.

Sincerely,
Salesforce
REI
American Forests
American Forest Foundation
One Tree Planted
Society of American Foresters
Regina Romero, Mayor of Tucson, Arizona