October 21, 2021

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Majority Leader  Speaker of the House
U.S. Senate  U.S. House of Representatives
The Capitol, Room S-221  The Capitol, Room H-232
Washington, D.C. 20510  Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leader Schumer and Speaker Pelosi:

The undersigned members of the Extreme Heat Resilience Alliance are writing to support passage of the bipartisan infrastructure and budget reconciliation bills complete with the many measures currently included in them that will help address our climate change-fueled extreme heat crisis. Taken together, these two policy measures would provide an unprecedented investment in built, green, and human infrastructure to foster heat resilience.

Heat already kills more Americans each year than any other extreme weather, and this threat will grow dramatically with climate change—with a recent study projecting approximately 59,000 U.S. deaths per year by 2050. The new White House initiative on extreme heat, announced last month, signals readiness from the U.S. Government to address this threat with a focus and scale that match the urgency of this issue.

The Extreme Heat Resilience Alliance has brought together a multi-sectoral coalition of leaders committed to reducing heat-related death and illness by helping communities around the world to build resilience. Our forty-plus members come from government, the private sector, health care, NGOs, philanthropy, and academia.

We see from our work in the field that we need to move quickly on the heat resilience solutions that these two policy measures could provide. These actions include but are not limited to community preparedness, data-driven planning, equitable tree canopy and other cooling green infrastructure, cool surfaces, heat-resilient housing and transportation, and targeted heat-resilience infrastructure from water fountains and water parks to cooling centers and “resilience hubs”.

States, local governments, and the private sector are stepping up to meet this challenge. This includes the landmark establishment of a Chief Heat Officer in Miami-Dade County, now being emulated by others, the commitment from the City of Phoenix to achieve tree equity in every neighborhood to combat heat vulnerability, and many other such examples.

The infrastructure bill and reconciliation package include historic investments to aid these efforts. This includes the $100 million per year Department of Transportation (DOT) Healthy Streets Program authorized in the infrastructure bill, and the additional $4 billion to DOT for heat resilient communities via the Transportation and Infrastructure portion of the reconciliation package. Relevant funding also includes the $3 billion for equitable urban tree cover through the U.S. Forest Service Urban and Community Forestry Program. Additional relevant measures abound in both bills.
The time to prepare for the 2022 heat season, and the increasingly dangerous ones to come, is right now. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of these recommendations. We look forward to working with you to confront the extreme heat crisis and keep Americans safe.

Signed,

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