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June 23, 2020

U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Support H.R. 51, the Washington, D.C. Admission Act.

Dear Representative,

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters across the country, we urge you to vote for H.R. 51, the Washington, D.C. Admission Act, to extend to the more than seven hundred thousand residents of our nation's capital equal representation in our federal government and the fundamental right to self-govern.

Our organizations share the common beliefs that the nation is made stronger when everyone can participate equitably in our political system, and that the protection of our environment is inextricably tied to the protection of our democracy. But for far too long, those who call Washington D.C. home have been denied a vote in Congress, and the ability to govern locally without the threat of targeted interference.

With a population larger than Vermont and Wyoming, as well as a growth rate larger than any state over the past decade, DC residents deserve full representation in both the House and Senate. DC residents overwhelmingly support statehood and want to be heard; 85.7 percent voted in favor in the 2016 statehood referendum. And despite objections from residents, Congress maintains the authority to interfere directly into the District's local government actions, with members of Congress not elected by DC residents repeatedly abusing this authority as a political tool. This puts all local actions under the threat of federal interference, including efforts to keep DC's air and water clean, and act on the climate crisis.

The federal government's treatment of DC during the past three months has further demonstrated the immediate need for statehood. Congress intentionally used DC's lack of statehood earlier this year to deny its access to full federal COVID funding, despite having one of the highest concentrations of confirmed cases. And the president suggested federalizing local law enforcement in order to take violent action against peaceful protesters in DC. The racist political and economic forces that perpetuate police violence against Black communities and expose communities of color to higher levels of toxic air pollution are the same.

DC residents face a disproportionate impact of our federal government's failure to act on climate and other pressing environmental harms. Low-income, Black and Indigenous communities have historically suffered the consequences of pollution and public health risks, and DC residents, more than half of whom are people of color, have experienced this environmental racism for generations.

Our nation is facing the unprecedented crisis of climate change, and the residents of DC deserve full federal representation in order to urge Congress to act. In addition to providing a vote in the legislative process, statehood would allow DC to participate fully in the budgetary and oversight authorities of Congress that govern the execution of our bedrock environmental laws, such as the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act. Finally, lifetime positions on our federal courts have a substantial influence on the future of our nation's environmental protections, and DC residents lack any voice in the Senate confirmation process.

H.R. 51 is an important and necessary step toward righting a historic wrong, fully enfranchising more than seven hundred thousand people and realizing our nation's values of equal representation. By establishing Washington D.C. as a state, while preserving a constitutionally required Federal District, this legislation returns power to the people, where it belongs.

For these reasons, we urge you to vote in support of H.R. 51, the Washington, D.C. Admission Act.

Sincerely,

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