

December 5, 2022

Chair Brenda Mallory
Chair, Council on Environmental Quality
730 Jackson Place NW
Washington, DC 20506

Dear Chair Mallory:

We strongly urge you to include at least \$2 billion in the FY 2024 President's Budget for the cleanup of contaminated sites under the Defense Environmental Restoration Program (DERP). Current funding levels are simply mismatched by the pace and scale of cleanups needed to protect communities from the "forever chemicals" known as per- and polyfluorinated alkyl substances (PFAS), while maintaining progress in the cleanup of existing contaminated sites at military installations and former military facilities.

Unfortunately, the administration's past budget proposals for DERP have failed to recognize the urgent need for substantially more funding, despite a White House announcement of a government-wide commitment to tackle PFAS in October 2021. In fact, the administration requested a *reduction* in DERP funding for FY 2023, to the disappointment of communities across the U.S. that are waiting for PFAS cleanups. The administration requested \$1.1 billion for DERP in FY 2023, even after Congress passed, on a bipartisan basis, \$1.5 billion in funding in FY 2022 for the program. In a letter to Department of Defense (DOD) Secretary Austin dated September 16, 2022, 40 U.S. Senators stated that DOD's failure to "adequately prepare for additional funding" is an obstacle to Congress providing even more resources for cleanups. The Senators strongly urged Secretary Austin to "match Congress' urgency..." by "appropriately increasing DOD's annual budget requests for PFAS-related activities..."

DOD sites constitute the largest known source of PFAS pollution in the U.S. Achieving the administration's stated goal of tackling PFAS depends on adequate funding for cleanups at these sites. At current funding levels and the current pace of military cleanups, many sites won't be cleaned up for 50 years, prolonging unacceptable health risks for military families, veterans and nearby communities. In testimony before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense in May 2021, a DOD witness estimated the cost of cleaning up *known* contamination at all DOD sites will approach nearly \$30 billion, while acknowledging full costs are likely to rise as sites are assessed for PFAS. PFAS have now been confirmed in water testing at 400 DOD facilities. The need to cleanup PFAS sites adds to an already large workload of 775 sites identified in

DERP's inventory. While the need for action on PFAS is urgent, it should not come at the expense of protecting other communities threatened by chemical contamination.

Communities have waited far too long for PFAS cleanups. The DOD's extensive use of PFAS-containing firefighting foam, despite known health risks, has imperiled lives and threatened water supplies for hundreds of communities. PFAS pollution is particularly concerning for low-income communities and communities that face historically disproportionate exposure to pollution, cumulative adverse health effects of multiple co-occurring contaminants, and potentially insurmountable costs of water treatment or remediation. In some communities, PFAS contamination of fish and wildlife, and local produce, threaten vital sources of food. Adding to these concerns, EPA in July 2022 updated its drinking water health advisories and stated that some negative health effects of PFAS may occur at concentrations in water near zero.

We commend the administration for doing more to address PFAS than any previous administration, including funding assistance for water infrastructure, as well as EPA's steps to regulate and clean up industrial sources of PFAS. But current and former federally-owned DOD contaminated sites present an on-going and substantial threat to communities. We now ask for the administration's leadership to secure \$2 billion in funding for DERP cleanups to fulfill the President's commitment to address PFAS.

Sincerely,

Alaska Community Action on Toxics
Alaska Environment
Buxmont Coalition for Safer Water
CALPIRG
Cape Fear River Watch
Cease Fire Campaign
Central Louisiana Coalition for a Clean & Healthy Environment
Citizens for Arsenal Accountability
Citizens for Safe Water Around Badger (CSWAB)
Clean Cape Fear
Clean Water Action
Clearya
Concerned Citizens for Nuclear Safety
Conservation Voters of Pennsylvania
CoPIRG
Defend Our Health
Earthjustice
Environment America
Environment California
Environment Connecticut
Environment Georgia
Environment Justice Task Force -Tucson
Environment Massachusetts

Environment New Jersey
Environment Oregon
Environment Texas
Environment Virginia
Environment Washington
Environmental Working Group
Family and Community Engagement Services, Inc.
Green Science Policy Institute
Highland Dairy
IllinoisPIRG
Kentucky Environmental Foundation
Maryland PIRG
MASSPIRG
Michigan League of Conservation Voters
Military Poisons
Milwaukee Riverkeeper
Moms for a Nontoxic New York
NCPIRG
Need Our Water (NOW) - Oscoda, Michigan
Newburgh Clean Water Project
OSPIRG
PennEnvironment
Safer States
Save Our Water (SOH2O)
Seneca Lake Guardian
Slingshot
Testing for Pease
Toxic Free Future
Toxic Free NC
U.S. PIRG
Vermont Natural Resources Council

cc: Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin
Undersecretary of Defense William A. LaPlante

Identical letter sent to Director Shalanda D. Young, Office of Management and Budget