

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20510

September 23, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
U.S. House of Representatives  
H-232, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
S-221, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader Schumer,

Paired together, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Deal (BID) and a \$3.5 trillion reconciliation package, provide a unique opportunity to create good paying American jobs while making meaningful progress towards avoiding the worst impacts of the climate crisis. However, if these bills do not curb our usage of single use plastic, or even worse, result in massive new investment in petrochemical infrastructure, and an expansion of plastic production, than we will have failed to meet this moment with the ambition that the climate crisis demands of us.

The production of plastic is a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions that accounted for 3.8% of greenhouse gas emissions globally in 2019. Plastic production is rising dramatically and as a result the role of plastic in the climate crisis is projected to increase. It is estimated that if it remains unchecked, the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from plastics will reach 15% of the global carbon budget by 2050. We cannot succeed in avoiding the worst impacts of the climate crisis without reducing our dependence on virgin plastics.

Plastic is not only a climate issue, it is a public health issue. Plastic pollution leaks into the environment and our water systems, releasing carcinogens and other highly toxic substances that poison communities around the facilities. Documented effects of exposure include impairment of the nervous system, reproductive and developmental problems, cancer, and genetic impacts like low birth weight.

Our history of environmental racism means that petrochemical facilities are more likely to be located in communities of color and low income communities. Therefore, it should serve as no surprise that low-income communities are impacted first, and hardest. A report from the United Nations Environment Programme said, “plastic pollution, including marine litter, disproportionately impacts persons, groups, and peoples in vulnerable situations and their basic rights, health, and well-being...” Plastic production and pollution are disproportionately harming our most vulnerable communities.

Unfortunately, the BID that passed the Senate contains several provisions that could lead to a significant expansion of virgin plastics. Provisions that could build out plastic infrastructure include:

- Title III qualifies plastic as carbon utilization and allows it to qualify for incentives.


- Section 40209 supports the burning of plastic by allowing it to receive grants as “advanced recycling.”
- Section 14511 provides funding to advance the Appalachian Regional Energy Hub, a project which backers hope will catalyze the creation of a new petrochemical corridor around the upper Ohio River.


If administered poorly, these provisions could result in a significant expansion of petrochemical infrastructure, and single-use plastic.


As Congress works to draft a reconciliation package, we must not include further support for plastic production. In particular, we must ensure that any provisions for carbon capture, utilization and storage, or “advanced recycling” cannot be used to expand the plastics supply chain.


We are in the midst of a plastic pollution and production crisis that is poisoning low-income Americans and communities of color while worsening the climate crisis. We cannot afford to pass a climate bill that would simultaneously build out our petrochemical infrastructure and worsen this crisis. We ask that as we move forward with the BID and the reconciliation bill you ensure that support for this toxic industry is not included.


Sincerely,

  
Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator

  
Alan Lowenthal  
United States Representative

  
Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator

  
Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator

  
Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator

  
Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



Karen Bass  
United States Representative



Jamie Raskin  
United States Representative



Jared Huffman  
United States Representative



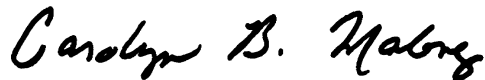
Mike Quigley  
United States Representative



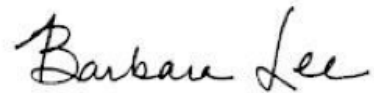
Katie Porter  
United States Representative



Earl Blumenauer  
United States Representative



Carolyn B. Maloney  
United States Representative



Barbara Lee  
United States Representative



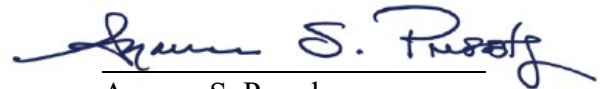
Emanuel Cleaver, II  
United States Representative



Rashida Tlaib  
United States Representative



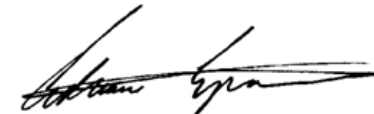
Raúl M. Grijalva  
United States Representative



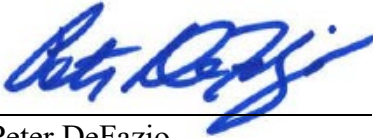
Ayanna S. Pressley  
United States Representative



Ritchie Torres  
United States Representative



Adrian Espaillat  
United States Representative



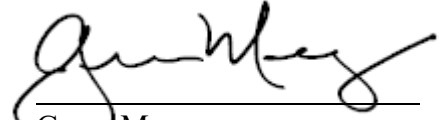
Peter DeFazio  
United States Representative



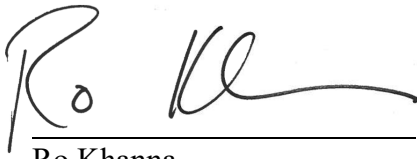
Maxine Waters  
United States Representative



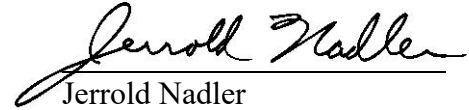
Jesus G. Garcia  
United States Representative



Grace Meng  
United States Representative



Ro Khanna  
United States Representative



Jerrold Nadler  
United States Representative



Mondaire Jones  
United States Representative