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May 10th, 2021

The Honorable Kamala Harris
U.S. Vice President
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Alex Padilla
U.S. Senator
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
U.S. Senator
331 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House
1236 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: [The American Jobs Plan] — Opportunities to Advance Equity in the American Jobs Plan

Dear California Congressional Delegation Members,

The American Jobs Plan represents an opportunity to revitalize and strengthen our country's infrastructure to ensure that it works for everyone, regardless of their race, income, class, or zip code. For too long America has underinvested in our physical and social infrastructure, leaving us with crumbling roads and gaping holes in the social safety net, particularly in low-income communities of color. With strong congressional leadership and using the American Jobs Plan as a blueprint, we have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to take a transformative step towards an economically and environmentally resilient future.

The Greenlining Institute is working towards a future where communities of color can build wealth, live in healthy places filled with economic opportunity, and are ready to meet the challenges posed by climate change. We work to embed innovative racial equity strategies across a wide range of policy areas, including climate mitigation and adaptation, economic equity, technology, health, and community development. Low-income communities of color are hit first and worst by almost all crises due to a long legacy of injustice; to address the root causes of these long standing racial disparities, the American Jobs Plan must embrace racial equity at its core. Pushing the envelope on racial equity will deliver economic opportunities and a better quality of life for all Americans, and particularly for low-income communities of color.

For three decades, The Greenlining Institute has been working to advance strategies in California that tackle both poverty and pollution at the same time while holding racial equity at the core of our

strategies. The principles and recommendations outlined in this letter provide California's leading strategies for addressing disinvestment, climate change, and structural racism, and we encourage you to champion these approaches to deliver a transformative American Jobs Plan.

Guiding Principles

Racial equity is not only a commitment, it is also a practice. Addressing the root causes of climate change and structural racism means equity must be core to the framework for action. Over the past three decades, The Greenlining Institute has helped to redirect billions of dollars into the communities we represent. Our experience has shown us that community investment must be guided by clear racial equity practices; otherwise, it will exacerbate existing inequities.

As outlined in the [Greenlined Economy Guidebook](#), we have developed a set of rules to govern funds and programs intended to address poverty and inequity. Without standards, we end up reinforcing the structures that caused these problems in the first place. These six standards are meant to address failures of equity in our current community investment model and should be included in the design of the American Jobs Plan.

Six Standards for Equitable Community Investment

- 1. Emphasize Anti-Racist Solutions.** Undoing racist policies like redlining and highway construction that segregate communities of color requires solutions that are explicit about race. Investments must target and prioritize resources to communities of color, while dismantling the structures that reinforce these inequities in the internal planning, power, and decision-making structures across all sectors.
- 2. Prioritize Multi-Sector Approaches.** Programs may be siloed, but problems are not. Investments need to prioritize approaches that address multiple issues and sectors at once.
- 3. Deliver Intentional Benefits.** Benefits cannot trickle down to communities; they need to go directly to the people most in need in the most impactful ways, while not increasing or creating new burdens.
- 4. Build Community Capacity.** Long-term disinvestment and discriminatory policies can erode a community's capacity for leadership, organizing or political capital. Investments must proactively resource technical assistance and capacity building.
- 5. Be Community-Driven at Every Stage.** Community-centered investment means lifting up community-led ideas and sharing decision-making power throughout every phase of a program's goal-setting, needs assessments, engagement, implementation and evaluation.
- 6. Establish Paths Toward Wealth-Building.** Investments should be accessible to as many people as possible, and create pathways to wealth building with low barriers to entry.

Upholding the Six Standards for Equitable Investment represents a key starting place. Yet it is also critical to embed these standards from start to finish throughout every policy, program, and funding stream in the American Jobs Plan. Greenlining's [Making Equity Real Framework](#) seeks to build in accountability for how equity shows up from the start to finish.

Making Equity Real Framework

1. **Mission, Vision and Values** — The American Jobs Plan should explicitly state a commitment to equity and specifically identify the vulnerable populations it seeks to benefit.
2. **Process** — The American Jobs Plan should deeply engage community members to learn about their priorities, needs and challenges to adapting to climate impacts. The information gathered should inform the development and implementation of the policies or funding.
3. **Outcomes** — The implementation of the American Jobs Plan must lead to equity outcomes that respond to a wide variety of community needs. Outcomes can include improved public health and safety, workforce and economic development, resilience to cope with climate disasters and more.
4. **Measurement and Analysis** — The American Jobs Plan should be evaluated for equity successes and challenges to improve the effort going forward.

Strategic Investments

Low-income communities of color are already experiencing devastating economic and physical impacts from COVID-19, pollution, and climate change impacts. These same families that were already feeling the impact of unemployment, housing vulnerability, and food insecurity now find themselves in an even more perilous situation. We are fighting for a Green New Deal for California that supports the communities hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic and invests in a future where we all can thrive. That means an immediate, massive, green stimulus and targeted economic support to local communities.

Funding and quickly deploying programs that can help ease the economic burden and create safer living environments for these families must be a priority in the American Jobs Plan. California already operates multiple cost-saving and climate-helping programs that can meet this challenge but more is needed. The following are recommendations for equitable investments and projects that can serve as a blueprint for how to implement the American Jobs Plan.

1. **Clean Mobility Equity and Vehicle Electrification**

Clean mobility programs that fund walking, biking, public transit, shared modes can not only help fight climate change and clean the air, they can improve mobility for underserved communities, reduce traffic and car dependency, and be engines of economic empowerment. Simultaneously, we must prioritize investments that increase access to electric vehicles and charging infrastructure to the hardest to reach communities. The American Jobs Plan holds great potential to advance clean mobility and vehicle electrification -- yet it is critical to implement the plan with equity at its core in a way that prioritizes underserved people over technology or market transformation. We must scale programs that comprehensively foster community-led mobility equity, such as the [Sustainable Transportation Equity Project](#), a California grant program that funds communities to weave together desired investments across transit, mobility, vehicle electrification and infrastructure, and more. We must promote federal and state interagency coordination and funding to maximize available resources for clean mobility investments and to target them to the people with the most barriers, such as the [Clean Vehicle Assistance Program](#). While in the short term, we should continue to provide clean vehicle incentives and charging infrastructure investments to the hardest to reach populations,

eventually we must phase out all programs that continue to entrench our dependency on single-occupancy vehicles.

2. **Just and Equitable Transition From Fossil Fuels**

Communities of color disproportionately bear both the pollution burden and energy burden of our extractive energy system. Experiencing higher rates of energy pollution inside their households from fossil fuel appliances, their comminutes from proximity to power plants and dedicating a greater percentage of their income to utilities leading to tremendous financial hardships. Many faced the risks and life-threatening impacts of disconnections from energy service prior to the pandemic, and millions more confront that crisis today as state utilities disconnections moratoriums expire. The American Jobs Plan can help reduce the burden of utility debt which will help prevent housing evictions and utility disconnections during this pandemic. Investing in fossil fuel-free technologies like electrification can provide environmental and social justice communities access to major benefits such as cleaner air, healthier homes, good jobs, and empowered workers. The American Jobs Plan holds tremendous potential to significantly reduce the health impacts and energy burden of vulnerable households through deep weatherization, extending access to affordable fossil fuel-free energy, reducing monthly energy bills, preserving housing affordability. While fossil fuel-free technologies like electrification have potential benefits for residents and for the nation, the rollout of policies at the local, state, and federal level must be undertaken equitably so existing energy inequities are not further exacerbated. Decision makers must ensure that environmental and social justice communities are supported to transition to fossil fuel-free homes. In electrifying homes, decision makers should follow the "[Equitable Building Electrification Framework](#)" which includes assessing communities' needs, establishing community-led decision-making, developing metrics and a plan for tracking, ensuring funding, program leveraging and improving outcomes.

3. **Broadband**

Many low-income households have limited access to affordable technology and internet services and rely on schools, internet cafes, and other community facilities to connect to this essential tool of everyday life. The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed the threats of this digital divide. Technology and internet service is critical for getting up-to-date health and safety information, registering for vaccination, supporting remote student learning, finding and accessing emergency resources, and engaging in public decision-making processes. Immediate solutions include banning disconnections for nonpayment, leveraging internet services at community facilities as public Wi-Fi hotspots, and providing funding to nonprofits and community-based organizations that can help meet household technology needs. The American Jobs Plan can deploy all-fiber infrastructure nationally, which is critical to ensuring all Americans, particularly low-income Americans, gain access to this most basic service of the 21st century.

4. **Climate Mitigation, Adaptation and Resilience**

The American Jobs Plan proposes to modernize and strengthen our nation's infrastructure to climate change impacts, yet to build the resilience of our infrastructure and our people, policies and programs must meet a triple bottom line of centering equity, meeting community climate resiliency needs and creating genuine economic opportunity, particularly for low-income communities of color and other vulnerable populations. This cannot be achieved by promoting a

conventional approach to climate resilience that focuses almost exclusively on natural resources and built infrastructure. California offers several programs that achieve meaningful community climate resilience benefits that should be scaled and replicated nationally such as [Transformative Climate Communities](#), [Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities](#), [Low-Income Weatherization](#), [Urban and Community Forestry](#), and [Regional Climate Collaboratives](#). California is also embarking on new concepts that meet the challenges posed by climate change like Community Resilience Centers and Distributed Clean Energy Systems.

5. Research and Development

We applaud the American Jobs Plan's emphasis on research and development. Yet to ensure that research benefits marginalized communities, we recommend baking in [equity principles and practices](#) into the research and development section of the Plan to ensure that future technologies and programs are developed and deployed in an inclusive, equitable manner.

Conclusion

The attached document expands upon the recommendations listed above with examples of existing programs or efforts in California. We urge your strong consideration of these strategic principles, practices, and investment priorities as you shape legislation. We also invite you to engage with Greenlining as thought partners to develop an American Jobs Plan that works for all. California has long been a leader on bold racial equity and climate change ideas. It is time for Californians leaders and innovative approaches to be front and center in this important fight for the American Jobs Plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Debra Gore-Mann'.

Debra Gore-Mann
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