

July 7, 2021

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-221 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitchell McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-230 Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Minority Leader McConnell:

We represent a diverse group of stakeholders, including businesses, teachers, labor, and advocates for public health, child welfare, consumers, and a healthier environment. For the health of our communities and children, we urge you to take bold action now to electrify America's school bus fleet. A federal investment of \$30 billion over 10 years would cover the school bus price differential, workforce training, and infrastructure costs for nearly 250,000 electric school buses, half of the nation's fleet.¹ This investment would jumpstart the electric transition of the nation's school bus fleet until price parity for the technology is reached and other sources of private investments catalyze the sector. In order for these dollars to reach the communities where they are most needed, a federal program should prioritize school districts with low-income families and students with health burdens.

Nearly 95 percent of America's school buses run on diesel, a fossil fuel that has been shown to cause numerous health problems, including asthma, bronchitis, and cancer. Each year, pollution from cars, trucks, and other vehicles cuts short an estimated 58,000 lives, and increases the risk of lung cancer, stroke, and heart disease; this is all the more dangerous for children whose lungs and brains are still developing, making them more vulnerable.² Air pollution also makes people more vulnerable to respiratory diseases like COVID-19.³ Transitioning to all-electric school bus fleets would prevent the release of 5.3 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions each year, and protect students' lungs by keeping diesel exhaust out of the air inside and

¹ "How much would it cost to electrify the nation's school buses?," Jobs to Move America, April 8, 2021, <https://jobstomoveamerica.org/resource/how-much-would-it-cost-to-electrify-half-the-nations-school-buses/>.

² Caiazzo, Fabio, Akshay Ashok, Ian A. Waitz, Steve H.L. Yim, and Steven R.H. Barrett. "Air Pollution and Early Deaths in the United States. Part I: Quantifying the Impact of Major Sectors in 2005." *Atmospheric Environment* 79 (2013): 198–208. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.atmosenv.2013.05.081>.

³ Wu, X., R. C. Nethery, M. B. Sabath, D. Braun, and F. Dominici. "Air Pollution and COVID-19 Mortality in the United States: Strengths and Limitations of an Ecological Regression Analysis." *Science Advances* 6, no. 45 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.abd4049>.

outside of the buses.⁴ In addition to the direct public health benefits, electric school buses can improve community resilience by offering backup power sources in emergency situations.

We call on the United States Senate to come together to advance targeted investments in the American economy at the scope and scale required to improve children's health and academic performance and accelerate the deployment of clean technologies. These smart investments for our economy will reduce emissions and build community resilience to extreme weather. Our shared priorities for clean buses for kids include:

- 1. Electric School Buses**

Student transportation budgets are underfunded and are often the first to be cut, especially for low-income schools.⁵ Many school districts across our country are still purchasing used diesel buses to transport our communities' children because they do not have adequate funding to purchase new buses. The upfront cost of a new electric school bus is currently significantly higher than the cost of a new diesel school bus.⁶ School districts need easy access to reliable, dedicated funding to cover the higher upfront cost of new electric school buses.

- 2. Manufacturing Jobs, Workforce Development and Re-Training**

Electric school buses are the buses of the future. U.S. manufacturers are already producing EV school buses (Blue Bird, Thomas, IC). Lion Electric has invested in a new U.S. plant and others are gearing up. Taking bold action to spur deployment now provides the opportunity to safeguard and create long-term, high-quality manufacturing jobs in the United States; provide career paths in underserved communities; and ensure opportunities for workers experienced in incumbent technologies. To achieve these critical objectives, and enhance the overall economic benefits of this shift, an equitable electric school bus policy must require: 1) high road labor standards; 2) strong Buy America provisions (at least as strong as those of the Federal Transit Administration) for domestic assembly, manufacturing, and the EV and EVSE supply chain, including requiring that charging infrastructure be installed by Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Training Program (EVITP) credentialed electricians; and 3) job retention and workforce training tied to the maintenance and operation of school buses into the future. When we invest in clean, sustainable, high-wage American jobs, we create a safe, healthy and prosperous future for our families and our local communities.

- 3. Charging Infrastructure**

Funding for charging infrastructure is paramount to electric school bus funding and is often overlooked in the allocation of resources related to transportation electrification.

⁴ Miller, Alana, Hye-Jin Kim, Jeffrey Robinson, and Matthew Casale. "Electric Buses Clean Transportation for Healthier Neighborhoods and Cleaner Air ." Frontier Group, U.S. PIRG Education Fund, and Environment America, May 2018.

<https://uspirg.org/sites/pirg/files/reports/Electric%20Buses%20-%20National%20-%20May%202018%20web.pdf>.

⁵See e.g. Kasler, Karen. 2017. "Schools Concerned About \$100 Million Cut To Student Transportation In Budget."

<https://www.statenews.org/post/schools-concerned-about-100-million-cut-student-transportation-budget>.

⁶ Smith, Conner. "Electric Trucks and Buses Overview." Washington, DC: Atlas Public Policy, July 2019. <https://atlaspolicy.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Electric-Buses-and-Trucks-Overview.pdf>.

Without the appropriate infrastructure to support electric school buses, the buses cannot reach their full operational potential and may not be able to meet school districts' basic needs. Federal funding is not only needed to purchase and install the appropriate charging equipment, but should also be available to pay for construction and electric utility upgrades if schools need it.

4. Innovation and Grid Benefits

Electric school buses are the ideal vehicle to pioneer the widespread use of vehicle-to-grid (V2G) and vehicle-to-building (V2B) technologies. These technologies will provide financial benefits for school districts and improve grid resilience and emergency response. The demand response and storage potential of electric school buses also promote environmental justice outcomes by reducing peak demand and power plant pollution and by supporting deployment of renewable energy.⁷

5. Local Planning

To ensure that large-scale federal dollars are spent wisely, Congress should invest in local electric school bus planning efforts. The appropriate number and capacity of electric school buses and the specific charging equipment and infrastructure needs of each school district can only be determined through technical analysis and transportation planning. As this is something that most school districts cannot afford to do on their own and, in most cases, do not have the capacity to do internally, federal support in making the transition should be offered to those who need it. Thoughtful, long-term planning and coordination with utilities and other stakeholders will safeguard federal investments and guarantee that they have the greatest benefits for local communities, schools, and the electric grid.

It is clear that lawmakers, industry groups, manufacturers, and school transportation officials across the country recognize that our children deserve a clean ride to school and that the impact of this funding will extend beyond the bus. Thank you for your leadership in advancing clean transportation and infrastructure and investing in education and workforce development that will benefit Americans for generations to come.

Respectfully,

Alianza for Progress
American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy (ACEEE)
American Federation of Teachers
AMPLY Power
BlueGreen Alliance
Center for Transportation and the Environment
Ceres
Chispa
Chispa Florida

⁷ Noel, Lance, and Regina McCormack. "A Cost Benefit Analysis of a V2G-Capable Electric School Bus Compared to a Traditional Diesel School Bus." *Applied Energy* 126 (July 1, 2014): 246–55.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apenergy.2014.04.009>.

Chispa Maryland
Clean Energy Works
Dream Corps Green For All
Earthjustice
EcoMadres
Environment America
Environmental Defense Fund
Environmental Law & Policy Center
Florida Conservation Voters
Forth
Generation180
GreenLatinos
H.A. DeHart & Son
Heliox
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers
League of Conservation Voters
Lion Electric
Moms Clean Air Force
Mothers Out Front
National Consumer Law Center on behalf of its low-income clients
Natural Resources Defense Council
Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates, Inc.
New York League of Conservation Voters
Plug In America
Riders Alliance
Sage
Scale Microgrid Solutions
Siemens Industry Inc
Sierra Club
Transportation for Massachusetts
The Mobility House
U.S. Public Interest Research Group (PIRG)
VEIC
ViriCiti
Voices for Progress