



March 1, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden
Vice President Kamala Harris
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President and Madam Vice President:

On behalf of the Electric School Bus (ESB) Coalition, a diverse partnership of civil society organizations, we write to encourage your administration to take action on school bus electrification consistent with your commitment to reach all new zero-emission American-made buses by 2030. Deploying zero-emission school buses would help meet our climate goals while reducing harmful air pollution, protecting children’s health, and even boosting academic performance.

The anticipated recovery, or Build Back Better, package presents a critical opportunity to advance school bus electrification and to build back better and greener after the devastation of COVID-19. **A federal investment of \$25 billion over 10 years 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. This level of federal funding would cover the price differential, training, and infrastructure costs for nearly 200,000 electric school buses, almost half of the nation’s fleet. In order for these dollars to reach the communities where they are most needed, we request that you tailor this program to prioritize low-income communities of color who bear the highest pollution**

burden and worst air quality. These communities -- our communities -- should be consulted and included in the decision-making process as sites and fleet choices are selected.

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 pollution also makes people more vulnerable to diseases like COVID-19. Transitioning to all-electric school bus fleets would prevent the release of 5.3 million tons of greenhouse gas emissions each year, and protect our kids' lungs by keeping diesel fumes out of the air inside and outside of the buses.

Electric school buses are the buses of the future, and taking bold action to spur deployment now provides the opportunity to both 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 ESB policy must require high road labor standards; strong Buy America provisions for assembly, manufacturing, and the entire EV supply chain, including charging infrastructure; and ensure job retention and workforce training tied to the maintenance and operation of school buses into the future. As President Biden has said, our move toward EVs is also an American jobs story, and that includes school buses.

In 2019, members of our coalition were pleased to work closely with then-Senator Kamala Harris to help develop the Clean School Bus Act, a bill establishing a federal grant program to help school districts electrify school buses. To rally political support for the act, the coalition mobilized parents, students, and youth to contact their Members of Congress, securing 16 co-sponsors in the Senate and 52 co-sponsors in the House of Representatives. We are excited to see backing for this bill and similar measures grow exponentially, especially now that Senators Catherine Cortez Masto and Patty Murray and Reps. Jahana Hayes and Tony Cárdenas have reintroduced similar legislation into the 117th Congress. 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.

Racial, social, economic, and environmental justice principles are the guiding force of the ESB Coalition. The ESB Coalition was established by Chispa, a program of the League of Conservation Voters organizing communities of color, the Environmental Law & Policy Center (ELPC), Sierra Club, and VEIC in 2017. The coalition has focused on organizing local community members and stakeholders to seek a transition from dirty diesel to zero-emission electric school buses, starting in the communities most harmed by air pollution. We have organized thousands of families and school districts across the country through educational workshops, petition collections, electric school bus demonstrations and tours, marches and rallies, press conferences, and citizen lobbying, succeeding in securing initial investments in electric school buses for students in Arizona, Maryland, California, Michigan, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, New York, Massachusetts, and Vermont.

Today, the ESB Coalition has grown to include a diverse set of equity, labor, clean energy, and environmental organizations working towards one goal: a full transition of the nation's school bus fleet to electric models that will result in 25 million children breathing cleaner air. Momentum is on our side; a myriad of pilot projects across the country have proven that electric school buses are significantly safer and healthier for our children and communities, while also costing less to operate. 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, improve grid resilience and emergency response, pave the way for the increased adoption of renewable energy sources, and promote environmental justice outcomes by reducing the need for heavily-polluting peaker plants. It's no wonder that school districts from Nevada to Minnesota to Texas to Connecticut are now seeking funding to replace dirty diesel models with clean school buses.

We enter 2021 renewed and inspired by the opportunities your administration presents and cognizant of the challenge before us. Fully transitioning the nation's fleet will require coordination across school districts, utilities, manufacturers, and government agencies; a firm commitment to equity; inclusive procurement practices; and most importantly, funding. Yet we have never been more optimistic that the time has come to transform how we transport students and, in the process, reach other crucial climate, health, resilience, and economic benefits.

The nation's school children are counting on us. Let's show them we're ready to deliver.

Respectfully,

Chispa, a program of the League of Conservation Voters
Chispa Arizona
Chispa Florida
Chispa Maryland
Chispa Nevada
Clean Energy Works
Dream Corps Green For All
Earthjustice
Environmental Law and Policy Center
Florida Conservation Voters
League of Conservation Voters
Maryland League of Conservation Voters
Moms Clean Air Force
Mothers Out Front Virginia
New York League of Conservation Voters
Protegete
Sierra Club
VEIC
U.S. Public Interest Research Group