



August 23, 2021

Dear Members of Ohio's Congressional Delegation:

As conversations about federal infrastructure legislation advance, whether on one or two tracks, we want to highlight key priorities that must be part of legislation this year to ensure these investments benefit the Appalachian region, Ohio communities and our workers. Our region has long provided raw materials to fuel the prosperity of the nation while too many of our communities rank in the bottom 10 percent of the nation for high poverty and unemployment rates, and low incomes.

Federal climate infrastructure legislation presents an opportunity to bring much-needed federal resources into the region. Our state, like all of Appalachia, deserves a targeted share of these resources--one that properly reflects the contributions we made to the nation's prosperity over the last century, and one that delivers economic opportunities for our families and communities.

Ohio is ready for an Appalachian Climate Infrastructure Plan that creates good union jobs and builds local wealth while laying the foundation for a 21st century economy. An infrastructure plan must also recognize Appalachians already have many of the skills needed to do the work and an amazing system of union apprenticeship programs to train for the ones they don't. To accomplish these ends, the infrastructure package(s) must include community and labor standards designed to maximize the benefits of these investments for workers and the health of our communities.

WE MUST INVEST IN A 21ST CENTURY SUSTAINABLE OHIO AND APPALACHIA BY:

- Repairing the damage left behind by absentee corporations in the extractive industries: plugging orphan oil & gas wells, remediating abandoned mine lands and coal ash ponds, repairing dams & levees, repairing leaks in gas pipelines. Many of these jobs fit well with the existing skills of fossil fuel industry workers.
- Modernizing the electric grid includes reinforcing the electric grid for more distributed energy generation of the future, putting more of the grid underground to better weather severe storms, utility-scale clean energy, and investments in battery technology. By upgrading our antiquated electric system, decentralizing generation, expanding broadband, and making our homes and businesses more energy efficient, we will not only reduce our utility bills, but we can also create and retain new jobs. A recent PERI study indicates that \$2.9 billion federal investment into Ohio's electric grid could leverage an additional \$20 billion in private investment and create 149,860 jobs in the state.
- Bringing fast, affordable, reliable broadband to rural areas and city neighborhoods. Broadband is now a basic utility, like water, electricity, and transportation, as well as a requirement for smart grid,

for businesses, for education, for farmers, for communities and regions to thrive. A recent study by the Political Economy Research Institute showed that every \$1 billion invested in broadband investment results in 3,800 direct and indirect Ohio jobs, reinforcing the benefits of a robust investment in the region.

- Growing clean, efficient manufacturing. The federal government should help manufacturers modernize by funding manufacturing extension partnerships and industrial centers to provide low-cost industrial energy audits; supporting labor-management partnerships and manufacturing apprenticeships; and, funding industry-labor-university institutes that capitalize on Ohio and Appalachia skills, engineering know-how, and research to make our state and region global leaders in next generation products such as electric vehicle components, battery technology, and bioplastics made from agricultural products produced in the region. Shuttered coal plants and former steel facilities can and should be repurposed into industrial parks that are environmentally friendly (aka eco-industrial parks).
- Building a more sustainable transportation system: expand, electrify and upgrade public transit; expand access to electric vehicles, electric school buses, and EV charging stations; use subsidies to make EVs affordable for rural farmers, truck drivers, school districts, and construction trades and public transit affordable for workers, and ensure those EVs are made in America, with parts coming from Ohio and the other Appalachian states.
- Relaunching and updating the 1930s Civilian Conservation Corps to restore forests and waterways, repair damaged lands, help farmers adopt carbon absorbing regenerative practices, and create pathways to meaningful careers, including for returning citizens and for women and people of color.

ENSURE THAT FEDERAL INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENTS MAXIMIZE BENEFITS FOR OHIO AND APPALACHIA WITH STRONG LABOR AND COMMUNITY STANDARDS

Maximize creation of good union jobs by:

- Requiring Project Labor Agreements on all construction projects receiving more than \$100,000 in federal funds and that have a total project value of at least \$1,000,000.
- Bundling small projects into aggregate contracts of at least \$1 million.
- Ensuring workers have the right to join or form unions and bargain collectively in permanent jobs resulting from public investments.

Target benefits of job creation to coal industry workers and communities previously left behind:

- Develop a funding formula for a climate infrastructure investment package that gives priority to high-poverty census tracts, especially those with shuttered coal plants, former steel facilities, abandoned mine lands, and/or orphaned oil and gas wells.
- Create targeted hiring programs for historically disadvantaged groups, such as Black workers, women, and other people of color and for former coal workers. For example, reserve 20% of project hours for registered apprentices or pre-apprentices, with half of those work hours completed by workers from targeted hiring programs.
- Require creation of Community Benefit Advisory Boards with representation from labor, community, and employers to ensure successful implementation, community input, tracking, reporting, and accountability.

As you consider the goals, legislative language, and appropriations of an infrastructure package, we urge you to focus on these priorities. An Appalachian Climate Infrastructure Plan could enable federal infrastructure legislation to kick-start the creation of a “New Deal That Works for US” in Ohio and across Appalachia.

The ReImagine Appalachia campaign has economists, labor policy experts, community advocates, and community development experts ready to answer your questions, provide case studies, or help your staff further operationalize these recommendations.

This year’s federal infrastructure legislation is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for you to restore hope and shared prosperity to Appalachia and Ohio. We are anxious to help you seize the opportunity.

Signed,
ReImagine Appalachia Partners in Ohio

Timothy W. Burga, President
Ohio AFL-CIO

Mike Shriberg, Great Lakes Regional Executive Director
National Wildlife Federation

Rev. Joan VanBecelaere, Executive Director
Unitarian Universalist Justice Ohio

Amanda Woodrum, Senior Researcher
Policy Matters Ohio

Lea Harper, Managing Director
FreshWater Accountability Project Ohio

Matt Misicka, Executive Director
Ohio Conservation Federation

Christine Hughes and Bob O’Neil, Owners
Village Bakery & Café, Athens

Ben Lachman, Managing Partner
Nice Mohawk Limited, Athens

Carly Allen, President-Business Agent
Amalgamated Transit Union, Local 697

Victoria L. Rusu, President, Board of Directors
Green Industrial Manufacturing Ecosystem (GIME) Inc.

Tracy Sabetta, State Outreach Director
Moms Clean Air Force in Ohio

Miranda Leppla, Vice President of Energy Policy
Ohio Environmental Council

Bishop Marcia Dinkins, Executive Director
Black Women Rising

Peggy A. Berry, CEO
Thrive at Life: Working Solutions

Michael Sauvante, Executive Director
National Commonwealth Group, Inc.

Akshai Singh, Co-Chair
MOVE Ohio

Aimee Erickson, Executive Director
Citizens Coal Council

Fadhel Kaboub, President
Global Institute for Sustainable Prosperity

Kristen Olmi, Chief Economic, Policy Strategist
K.O. Consulting, LLC

Jill A. Hunkler, Director
Concerned Ohio River Residents

Deb Zabloudil, President
Vincentian Ohio Action Network

Susan Hass, Co-Leader
Indivisible: OH12 East

Mark R. Shanahan, Principal
New Morning Energy

Wendy Tarr, Director
Accompanying Returning Citizens with Hope (ARCH)

Christopher Stocking, Chair
Clevelanders for Public Transit