

*DC Environmental Network:*  
*Center for Biological Diversity • Chesapeake Climate Action Network*  
*DC Climate Action • DC Consumer Utility Board • DC Environmental Network*  
*DC Fiscal Policy Institute • DC Public Banking Center • DC Sierra Club*  
*DC Solar United Neighborhoods • DC Statehood Green Party • Foundation Earth*  
*Global Green USA • Green Cross International • GRID Alternatives Mid-Atlantic*  
*Institute for Local Self Reliance • Institute for Sustainable Power • MDV-SEIA*  
*National Housing Trust • New Columbia Solar • The Ocean Foundation*  
*Washington Parks & People • Wentworth Green Strategies*

*Sent Via Email: [pmendelson@dccouncil.us](mailto:pmendelson@dccouncil.us)*

June 9, 2017

Chairman Phil Mendelson  
Council of the District of Columbia  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Chairman Mendelson:

We are writing to oppose your decision to take \$7.5 million from the Renewable Energy Development Fund (REDF) for budget items that are inconsistent with the stated purpose of this fund.<sup>1</sup>

We also oppose your decision to use \$2.5 million of those \$7.5 million to replace \$2.5 million in local dollars removed from the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). We strongly support LIHEAP's goal of helping low-income residents with their energy bills in time of need but believe that, by inappropriately using REDF funds for LIHEAP, the Council endangers the viability of the program and will have a tough time making this program whole again without using more special purpose funds.

Your actions will make it harder for low-income families in the District to afford the rising cost of energy and delay the development of job-creating renewable energy projects. Furthermore, you are violating the D.C. Government's under oath statement to the D.C. Public Service Commission (PSC) that the D.C. Council would stop diverting this funding.

*We strongly oppose your last-minute confiscation and inappropriate use of \$7.5 million in REDF special purpose dollars and ask that you restore all these funds as well as restore the \$2.5 million in local funds you took from LIHEAP.*

---

<sup>1</sup> ***The Fund shall be used solely for the purpose of making loans, grants, rebates, and other financial incentives to support the creation of new solar energy sources in the District of Columbia and for otherwise administering the Fund. The Fund may be used to supplement programs supporting the creation of new solar energy sources in the District of Columbia through the Sustainable Energy Utility contract established by Chapter 17N of Title 8 [§ 8-1773.01 et seq.].***

The \$7.5 million from REDF money was slated to provide funding to reduce the energy costs of D.C.'s low-income families through the unanimously enacted Solar for All Program. LIHEAP is essential to help residents who are struggling to pay their energy bills.

District ratepayers fund REDF through a surcharge on their utility. This money is intended to support the development of renewable energy to foster a more competitive and lower cost energy market specifically for those ratepayers who might not otherwise be able to access the benefits of renewable energy. Your decision to strip this money from its intended use is part of a long pattern of the District government's misuse of funds. Ratepayers should legitimately question why we pay so much money into the renewable energy fund but see so little accomplished, and that these funds are turned in to just another revenue source for the District's budget. Your re-appropriation of funds risks turning the REDF into a regressive tax on the District residents who would benefit most from the development of renewable energy.

The Public Service Commission (PSC) has warned the Council that it has unlawfully diverted more than \$40 million dollars from ratepayer special purpose funds over the past 10 years. The D.C. Government swore under oath to the Commission that these un-ethical diversions would end.

The Council made these changes in the dark of night with no public accountability. You did not even mention your intention to sweep this money at the Friday budget meeting. How can taxpayers and ratepayers meaningfully engage in the budget process if all changes are done at the last minute, in back rooms, and with no accountability to the public?

These midnight raids of rate-payer special purpose funds must stop and be rejected by both the Council and the Mayor.

In a week where we have seen unprecedented attacks on climate action, the raid on these funds stands out as a particularly misguided decision. Across the world, and here in the United States, our governors, cities, and businesses are all stepping up to ensure we meet our obligations and commitments to climate action. This is not a time for the District to retreat or step back from its commitments.

Please restore the REDF monies to the fund and allow them to support the purpose for which they were collected. We also ask that you restore the \$2.5 million in local funds you took from LIHEAP.

Sincerely,

Anya Schoolman  
President  
**DC Solar United Neighborhoods**

Chris Weiss,  
Executive Director  
**DC Environmental Network**

David Murray  
Executive Director  
**Maryland-D.C.-Delaware-Virginia Solar  
Energy Industries Association (MDV-SEIA)**

Mark Rodeffer  
Chair  
**D.C. Sierra Club**

Nicole Steele  
Executive Director  
**GRID Alternatives Mid-Atlantic**

Ed Lazere  
Executive Director  
**DC Fiscal Policy Institute**

Ruth Caplan  
Co-Director  
**DC Public Banking Center**

Jack Werner  
Executive Director  
**Institute for Sustainable Power**  
And Senior Fellow of the Climate Institute  
And Senior Associate of The Stella Group, Ltd.

Michael J. Healy  
CEO  
**New Columbia Solar**

Brent Blackwelder  
Chair, Board of Directors  
**Foundation Earth**

Bill Snape  
Senior Counsel  
**Center for Biological Diversity**

Steve Coleman  
Executive Director & President  
**Washington Parks & People**

Paul F. Walker, Ph.D.  
Director, Environmental Security and  
Sustainability  
**Green Cross International**

Matt De La Houssaye  
Director, New York City Office  
**Global Green USA**

Robert Robinson  
Chair  
**DC Consumer Utility Board**

Pranay Kohli  
Solar Finance Fellow  
**National Housing Trust (NHT)**

Camila Thorndike, Carbon Pricing Coordinator  
Jeremiah Lowery, Climate Justice Organizer  
**Chesapeake Climate Action Network**

John Macgregor  
Chair  
**DC Climate Action**

Marchant Wentworth  
Principal  
**Wentworth Green Strategies**

Mark Spalding  
President  
**The Ocean Foundation**

Neil Seldman  
President  
**Institute for Local Self Reliance**

David Schwartzman  
Chair, Political Policy and Action Committee  
**DC Statehood Green Party**

Cc: DC Council and Mayor