



January 25, 2021

The Honorable Ed Markey
United States Senator for Massachusetts

Dear Senator Markey:

As President of the Hawai'i Public Health Association I am sharing our strong support for your bill, the "Environmental Justice Mapping and Data Collection Act". HPHA appreciates the introduction of Federal legislation that will result in measurable outcomes for overburdened and vulnerable communities. In Hawai'i, the history of colonialism and systemic racism has had significant adverse effects on both the environment of the islands and the people living in areas where the harms are most severe.

The bill is thorough and comprehensive in terms of identifying various environmental burdens, socioeconomic factors related to hardship, health risks and outcomes, and other factors related to environmental injustice and using these to identify, map, and prioritize overburdened and vulnerable communities in the U.S.

The bill calls for including information directly from impacted communities, including employing qualitative data where quantitative data are lacking and "establishing a mechanism by which communities can self-identify as environmental justice communities", and for comprehensively identifying data gaps and taking steps to fill them.

In addition, the proposal connects the effort to identify environmentally disadvantaged communities with policy outcomes, such as taking steps to reduce pollution in overburdened communities and targeting them for enhanced investments ("at least 40% of the funds provided for a clean energy transition").

Another strength of the bill is the call for updating data frequently ("not less frequently than annually"). This would allow for detecting changes in community conditions relatively quickly, a valuable step in determining whether policies intended to reduce environmental injustices are working. The bill also calls for updating the list of indicators and methodology at least once every three years, another valuable step in continually improving and updating the environmental justice identification, mapping, and prioritizing process.

These are groundbreaking steps in advancing environmental justice in the U.S. that are long overdue. The Hawai'i Public Health Association is in full support of this bill.

Aloha,


Pedro Haro, MPH
President, Hawai'i Public Health Association