



September 9, 2020

A Letter to the Washington State Environmental Justice Task Force:

UAW Local 4121 strongly supports the [policy proposals](#) of the Washington Environmental Justice Task Force, which outline steps toward operationalizing environmental justice in state and local agencies.

As members of UAW Local 4121, the union representing over 6,000 academic student employees and postdocs at the University of Washington, we live in neighborhoods surrounding all three campuses: Seattle, Tacoma, and Bothell. We work in solidarity to advocate for equity, fair working conditions, and to orient Washington's higher education institutions toward racial and environmental justice. We would like to highlight our support for the following Environmental Justice Task Force recommendations:

- Ensure the state studies and reports environmental health disparities, together with communities, to determine areas of highest burden and greatest need of pollution reduction.
- Remove barriers to community engagement and participation in environmental justice with adequate resources which may include childcare, food, access to broadband, bilingual materials, and other accessibility measures
- Require that environmental spending which includes work projects, whether private or public, have high labor standards and contract with women, veteran, and/or minority-owned businesses
- Ensure that investments, grants, and revenue related to environmental projects support a reduction in environmental health disparities
- Incorporate environmental justice into state environmental laws, including the Growth Management Act.

- Enhance efforts to engage and communicate with communities in thoughtful and meaningful ways accounting for barriers to participation for impacted communities.
- Recognize that environmental health disparities are a result of historic and present-day white supremacy. Establish a task force or committee, together with BIPOC communities, to develop policy proposals to repair multigenerational harms.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated racial inequities, with disparate infection and mortality rates experienced by communities of color, and higher COVID-19 mortality rates in communities with higher burdens of air pollution. Along with a national reckoning of systemic racism in America in the wake of the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and the shooting of Jacob Blake, this public health crisis underscores the need for concrete steps to ensure environmental justice in the state of Washington and beyond.

Lastly, we support efforts to address reparations to frontline communities. This should include leveraging our state policies for environmental justice and land use toward restorative justice and reparations to Black communities from the legacy of colonialism and slavery as well as the impacts of racist housing, land use, and transportation policy on Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and communities of color.

Signed,

Elected Members of the UAW Local 4121 Joint Council

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