The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Senate Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington DC 20510  

CC: Chairwoman Stabenow, Chairman Sanders  

Dear Senator Schumer,  

The undersigned organizations wish to express their deep concern about the factory farm incentives included in the Build Back Better Act, and urge you to reject the manure digester and Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) incentives outlined below in the final Bill and to prioritize funding farm practices that build healthy soils.  

CAFOs are an extractive, exploitative, and unsustainable model for American agriculture. Already, factory farms receive immense financial support through government subsidies and enjoy a lack of regulatory oversight. CAFOs and factory farms are not part of the climate solution and have no place in the Build Back Better Act. CAFOs pollute our climate and the environment, threaten public health, and disproportionately harm BIPOC communities. If the majority is to be the party of working-class families and revitalizing the US economy, advocating for incentives that would exacerbate the harms caused by CAFOs and other factory farms would be grossly misguided.  

CAFOs fuel the climate crisis. The Build Back Better Act that passed the House of Representatives would substantially incentivize building CAFO methane digesters. A CAFO houses thousands of animals and collects their urine and manure in large pits located either under the CAFO building or in a nearby lagoon. The liquid waste releases methane as it decomposes, which is then burned for energy. This type of methane capture is falsely labeled as a “renewable energy” source as liquid manure emits more methane than solid manure in a dry lot or on pasture. Methane, a greenhouse gas, is 84 times more potent than carbon dioxide over a twenty year time frame. Manure digesters require a scale of thousands of animals to operate, causing further expansion of CAFOs and their greenhouse gas emissions, as well as displacement of small and medium-sized farmers across the nation. For example, manure digesters for dairies require thousands of animals to operate efficiently. Investing in manure digesters comes with the unacceptable trade-off of harming the surrounding communities by expanding the factory farms that are destroying their quality of life.  

Congress should be finding solutions that reduce reliance on a supply chain that creates liquid manure and methane, not patching together harmful remedies that prop up factory farms. The Build Back Better Act prioritizes building resilient human infrastructure and combating the climate crisis -- CAFOs are antithetical to both.  

CAFOs are extremely detrimental to local air and water quality, as well as the broader environment. While methane may seem like an abstract threat, your friends, neighbors, and constituents suffer directly from the many other polluting impacts of CAFOs. Drinking water, especially in rural areas, is likely to be contaminated with nitrates and bacteria from CAFO-sourced manure after running off from fields and into local waterways and drinking wells.  

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Environmental Protection Agency has long cautioned that CAFOs are a leading contributor to dangerously high levels of toxic particles in water, leading to fish kills and polluted drinking water.

CAFOs and factory farms jeopardize public health. In 2019, the American Public Health Association called for a precautionary moratorium on new and expanding CAFOs. Workers and neighboring residents of CAFOs are at a higher risk of developing asthma, allergies, and decreased lung function than those who do not live by CAFOs. Over 150 pathogens can be found in manure from CAFOs causing serious diseases in humans, such as Anthrax, Leptospirosis, Listeriosis, Salmonella poisoning, Giardiasis, and many others. Health risks are greater for children and those who are immunocompromised. The World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations have warned that humans are also at ever-higher health risks because CAFOs create superbugs by increasingly relying on antibiotics to control diseases in animals, so much so that the microbes being controlled develop immunity to the drugs and mutate. As such, CAFOs create microbes that infect humans, and are resistant to life-saving antibiotics used by medical professionals.

CAFOs are a tool of environmental racism and injustice. CAFOs tend to be built in and around communities with the least financial and political resources to fight back against the extractive operations. In many parts of the country, this tends to be in Black communities with histories of enslaved labor and sharecropping. In North Carolina, CAFOs were 5 times more likely to be located in majority non-white communities and 7 times more likely in high-poverty areas. Workers in CAFOs tend to be immigrants and face grueling working conditions. Communities of all affluence levels tend to oppose proposed CAFO sites, so the intentional placement in BIPOC and low-wealth communities is an environmental injustice that must be ended -- not perpetuated by the Build Back Better Act.

CAFOs are a driving factor of an unjust food system that pollutes the environment, threatens human health, and perpetuates systemic racism and inequity. They have no role in the Build Back Better Act. CAFO operators already enjoy many incentives and do not need another program built from funds meant to support working families. Furthermore as written the bill would allow factory farms to stack incentives essentially encouraging a CAFO boom across the country. The House-passed BBB includes the following incentives:

- A set-aside for “underutilized technology” (which is likely to primarily fund manure digesters) in new grant funding for the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP);
- Expanded eligibility for the 30% renewable energy tax credit to offset upfront costs associated with building digester systems, including manure digesters; and
- An additional $9 Billion in funds for USDA’s Environmental Quality Incentives Program without proper guardrails to restrict this funding from going to support manure digesters for CAFOs instead of other more beneficial practices that would contribute to diversified and equitable climate-friendly food production.

Further incentivizing CAFOs would be misguided and firmly against the best interests of Americans. In 2019, the Center for Livable Future at Johns Hopkins University published poll results of likely voters in heavy CAFO states who strongly favored moratoriums on new CAFOs. Factory farms would not be viable without the federal subsidies they rely on, the lack of regulatory oversight they enjoy, and the political power of the corporations that profit from them. CAFOs are not the first choice of voters, farmers, consumers, or even the free market -- but
rather the product of corporate food giants that make their money from exploitation, often aided by government support.

We, the undersigned organizations, urge that you reject any new CAFO incentives in the forthcoming draft of the Build Back Better Act to be voted on in the Senate.

Sincerely,

350 Eugene
350 Hawaii
350 Seattle
350 Triangle
350 Wenatchee
50by40
ActionAid USA
Advancing Collective Equity
ADVOCACY COLLABORATIVE
Agrarian Food Web LLC
Alaska Community Action on Toxics
All Together Now Pennsylvania
Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments
American Grassfed Association
American Sustainable Business Network
Animal Legal Defense Fund
Animal Legal Defense Legislative Fund
Animal Legal Society (VLS)
Animals Are Sentient Beings, Inc
Applecroft Farm
Arkansas Ozark Waterkeeper
Assateague Coastal Trust
Balanced
Be Well with Brialle and The Black Women’s Healing Haven
Beyond Pesticides
Big Reuse
Bionutrient Food Association
Black Veg Society
Black VegFest
Bothered Earth, LLC
Breakthrough Strategies and Solutions
Bright Building LLC
Brighter Green
Broad Riverkeeper
Buffalo River Watershed Alliance
Businesses for a Livable Climate
CA Businesses for a Livable Climate
Call to Action Colorado
Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment
CatholicNetwork US
Catskill Mountainkeeper
Center for Arkansas Farms and Food
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Food Safety
Centralas Wine LLC
Chicago Food Policy Action Council
Chilis on Wheels
Clean and Healthy New York
CleanAirNow
Climate Hawks Vote
Climate Justice Alliance
Climate Reality Project Silicon Valley
CO Businesses for a Livable Climate
Coming Clean
Compassion in World Farming USA
Concerned citizen
Dakota Rural Action
DC Greens
Earth Action, Inc.
Earth Action, Inc.
Eating Animals Causes Pandemics
Encompass
Environment America
Environmental Justice Ministry Cedar Lane
Unitarian Universalist Church
Extinction Rebellion San Francisco Bay Area
Factory Farming Awareness Coalition
Fair World Project
Family Farm Action
Family Farm Defenders
Farm Aid
Farm Forward
Farmworker Association of Florida
Food & Water Watch
Food Animal Concerns Trust
Food as Medicine Nutrition Counseling
Food Revolution Network
Friends of the Earth
Friends of Family Farmers
Gladney Farm
Good Omand Farm
Good Stewards
Government Accountability Project Food Integrity Campaign
Grassroots Environmental Education
Green Education and Legal Fund
Green Sanctuary committee of the Unitarian-Universalist Church of Silver Spring
Green State Solutions
Green Village Communications
Greenpeace USA
Grow For Food
Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy
Hawai’i Alliance for Progressive Action (HAPA)
Hebbard Fence, LLC
Hedgerow Hill Farm, LLC
Hip Hop is Green
Hudson Varick Resources
Humane Society International
Humane Society Legislative Fund
Humane Society of the United States
Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association
Hungry Bear Farm
I-70 Citizens Advisory Group
Indigenous Environmental Network
Indivisible Ambassadors
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement
Jefferson County Farmers & Neighbors, Inc.
Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future
JSA Sustainable Wealth Management
Just Transition Alliance
Kickapoo Peace Circle
Kitchen Dwellers, LLC
Kitchen Sync Strategies
Land Stewardship Project
LEAD for Pollinators, Inc.
Lean and Green Kids
Let's Green CA!
Locust Point Community Garden
Long Beach Alliance for Clean Energy
Los Jardines Institute
Loudoun Climate Project
Maryland Pesticide Education Network
Mercy For Animals
MiCCA
Michigan Organic Food and Farm Alliance
Mid-Ohio Valley Climate Action
Milwaukee Riverkeeper
Montbello Neighborhood Improvement Association
MOSA Certified Organic
MountainTrue
National Family Farm Coalition
National Farm to School Network
National Farm Worker Ministry
National Latino Farmers & Ranchers Trade Association
Navitas Organics
NC Climate Justice Collective
NC Clinicians for Climate Action
Neighboring Food Co-op Association
Non Toxic Communities
North Range Concerned Citizens
Northeast Organic Dairy Producers Alliance
Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York
Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont
Northeast Organic Farming Association-Interstate Council
Northern Plains Resource Council
NWI Food Council
NYCLASS (New Yorkers for Clean, Livable, and Safe Streets)
Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association
Organic Seed Growers and Trade Association
Our Climate
Our Climate Education Fund
Pasture Raised Foods
PDA Arizona
People & Pollinators Action Network
Pesticide Action Network
Planetary CARE
Planetphilia
Plant Powered Metro New York
PlantPure Communities
Princeton Student Climate Initiative
ProVeg International
ProVeg USA
PSR Arizona
Public Justice
RapidShift Network
Reach Out America
Real Food Media
Regenerative Organic Alliance
Regenerative Rising
ReKavery Inc.
Renewable Rikers
Representing myself
Residents Allied for the Future of Tioga (RAFT)
Resource Renewal Institute
River Guardian Foundation
Rockland Farm Alliance
Rural Coalition
Rx4vida
Santa Cruz Climate Action Network
Savory Institute
SCCAN
Science and Environmental Health Network
SEE-LA (Social Eco Education)
SEED: Strategies for Ethical and Environmental Development, Inc.
Seeding Sovereignty
Sierra Harvest
Slow Food USA
Slow Food Youth Network USA
Small Business Alliance
Socially Responsible Agriculture Project
Sonoma Hot Sauce
STEAM URBAN
Stone Soup Garden
Stonewall farm
Stop SPOT & Gulflink
Stop the Algonquin Pipeline Expansion (SAPE)
StopCricketValley.org
Stray Dog Institute
Sunrise Hunterdon County
System Change Not Climate Change
Temple Beth Zion Brookline
Terra Advocati
The Compassion Project
The Green House Connection Center
The Planetary Health Collective
The Pollination Project
The Raven Corps
TIAA-Divest! From Climate Destruction
Toxic Free North Carolina
True Health Initiative
Tufts University
U.S. PIRG
Unite North Metro Denver
Until Justice Data Partners, Inc.
Utah Physicians for a Healthy Environment
Vegan Activist Alliance (VAA)
Vilicus Farms
VitalBeeBuds
Voters for Animal Rights
Walk Your Talk Productions
Wall of Women
Wally Farms
Water Climate Trust
Waterkeeper Alliance
West End Revitalization Association WERA
WildEarth Guardians
Wisconsin Health Professionals for Climate Action
Women Food and Agriculture Network (WFAN)
Womxn from the Mountain
World Animal Protection US
world citizen
Zero Hour