September 7, 2022

Senator Joseph Manchin III  
Hart Senate Office Building, 306  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator John Barrasso  
Dirksen Senate Office Building, 307  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Catherine Cortez Masto  
Hart Senate Office Building, 313  
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Mike Lee  
Russell Senate Office Building, 363  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairperson Manchin, Ranking Member Barrasso, Subcommittee Chair Cortez Masto, and Ranking Member Lee,

On behalf of the 87 undersigned organizations, we write to express our profound appreciation for the reauthorization of the Abandoned Mine Land program and substantial new funding for this program contained in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). Now we urge the committee to add another important piece of the puzzle that will ensure that the state Abandoned Mine Land programs are able to effectively use the IIJA funds to provide clean water for our coal country communities for years to come. We urge you to prioritize the swift passage of the STREAM Act (S. 3957). In July, this bill (H.R.7283) passed the House of Representatives with near unanimous support. We are eager to see this bill passed through the Senate so our communities and state agencies can have certainty in the future implementation of this important program.

The STREAM Act is necessary to the future of abandoned mine lands cleanup in our nation. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) contained a historic investment to create jobs by cleaning up abandoned mine lands. Unfortunately this historic allotment of funding does not allow for the creation of long term set aside accounts for acid mine drainage (AMD) clean up. These “savings accounts” are essential because acid mine drainage requires permanent treatment systems. They allow states to ensure that projects funded by the BIL will have perpetual treatment, thereby sustaining the thousands of stream miles that will be restored by AMD treatment. It should be noted that AMD set aside funds facilitate the creation of permanent AMD treatment jobs.

Historically, states have been permitted to set-aside up to 30% of their traditional AML Fee Funded program funds into an Acid Mine Drainage set-aside account, but these set aside accounts aren't permitted with the new Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Abandoned Mine Land funds. The STREAM Act simply resets the status quo and gives states the freedom to choose how to allocate their AML clean up funds.
For many years, state agencies have been forced to prioritize the most severe public safety hazards from AML over acid mine drainage and other issues due to budget limitations. We are hopeful that with the expanded budget, states can begin fully addressing acid mine drainage, which presents an enormous burden to local communities and decimates stream life.

Thousands of miles of streams and rivers still run orange from abandoned coal mine pollution. These streams present an enormous liability to the economic futures of our communities, please act swiftly to move this simple but powerful solution out of committee and pass it into law.

Sincerely,

National and Regional Partners
The Alliance for Appalachia
American Canoe Association (ACA)
Appalachian Voices
Chesapeake Conservancy
Chesapeake Legal Alliance
Christians For The Mountains
Citizens Coal Council
Climate Institute
Climate Justice Alliance
Defenders of Wildlife
Earth Ethics, Inc.
Environment America
Environneers
Environmental Law & Policy Center
Friends For Environmental Justice
Green Industrial Manufacturing Ecosystem
Hispanic Access Foundation
National Wildlife Federation
The Nature Conservancy
Ohio River Foundation
Ohio River Valley Institute
Potomac Riverkeeper Network
ReImagine Appalachia
Sierra Club
Trout Unlimited
Valley Watch, Inc.
Waterkeepers Chesapeake
Waterway Advocates, Inc.
Alabama
Alabama Rivers Alliance
Black Warrior Riverkeeper
Shoals Environmental Alliance

California
Richmond Local Action in Neighborhood Development
Sacramento River Council

Illinois
Eco-Justice Collaborative
Central Illinois Healthy Community Alliance
Mining Issues Team Illinois Chapter Sierra Club
Prairie Rivers Network

Indiana
Indiana Wildlife Federation
Owen-Putnam Friends of the Forest

Kentucky
Appalachian Citizens' Law Center
Kentuckians For The Commonwealth
Kentucky Conservation Committee
Kentucky Resources Council
Kentucky Waterways Alliance

Maryland
Beaverdam Creek Watershed Watch Group
Catoctin Land Trust
Chapman Forest Foundation
Friends of Quincy Run
Mattawoman Watershed Society

Missouri
Missouri Confluence Waterkeeper

Montana
Northern Plains Resource Council
New York
Butternut Valley Alliance
New York State Division, Izaak Walton League of America

North Carolina
NC Climate Justice Collective

Ohio
FreshWater Accountability Project
Ohio Conservation Federation
Ohio Environmental Council
Ohio Scenic Rivers Association
Rural Action

Pennsylvania
Breathe Project
Center for Coalfield Justice
Conservation Voters of Pennsylvania
Eastern PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation (EPCAMR)
League of Women Voters Pennsylvania
Mountain Watershed Association
Pennsylvania Jewish Earth Alliance
PennFuture
Pennsylvania Council of Churches
Three Rivers Waterkeeper

Tennessee
Clearfork Community Institute
Statewide Organizing for Community eMpowerment
Tennessee Citizens for Wilderness Planning
Woodland Community Development Corporation

Virginia
The Clinch Coalition
Southern Appalachian Mountain Stewards
Virginia Conservation Network

West Virginia
Cacapon Institute
Coal River Mountain Watch
Dunkard Creek Watershed Assn., Inc.
Friends of Blackwater, Inc.
Friends of the Cheat
Guardians of the West Fork River Watershed
Rise Up WV
Upper Monongahela River Assn., Inc.
West Virginia Citizen Action
West Virginia Environmental Council
West Virginia Rivers Coalition