



Mystic River Watershed Association
Letter to Roadmap Bill Conference Committee

October 14, 2020

The Honorable Michael Barrett
24 Beacon Street, Room 109-D
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Tom Golden
24 Beacon Street, Room 473B
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Cynthia Creem
24 Beacon Street, Room 312-A
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Patricia Haddad
24 Beacon Street, Room 370
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Patrick O'Connor
24 Beacon Street, Room 419
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable Bradley Jones, Jr.
24 Beacon Street, Room 124
Boston, MA 02133

Subject: H.4933, Environmental Justice

Dear Senator Barrett, Representative Golden, Senator Creem, Representative Haddad, Senator O'Connor, and Representative Jones, Honorable Members of the Conference Committee:

Thank you for passing Bill S.2500/H.4933, "An Act Creating a 2050 Roadmap to a Clean and Thriving Commonwealth" (Roadmap Bill). **The Mystic River Watershed Association is writing in support of the passage of this bill with the proposed recommendations made by Environmental Justice Legislation Table.**

Being charged with protecting and restoring the most densely populated watershed in New England—the Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA) can say with the utmost confidence that we have seen the disproportionate environmental impacts being placed on our most vulnerable communities. According to the study *Unequal Exposure to Ecological Hazards: Environmental Injustices in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts*, 7 communities within the Mystic are listed as the 15 most intensively environmentally overburdened of the 351 communities in MA. These communities include Everett, Somerville, Malden, Charlestown, Chelsea, East Boston and Cambridge. Much of this pollution is from serving as the industrial hub (historic and current) for Greater Boston. Additionally, we have seen underinvestment by the state in public park space in communities like Medford, Everett, Malden, Charlestown and Somerville in comparison with park space along the Charles River. These inequitable conditions are putting our community members' health at risk. This is especially true for vulnerable populations including people of color, recent immigrants



and those from low-to moderate incomes. Both COVID-19 and the racial reckoning that is happening right now show this continued and growing disparity.

As such, MyRWA is committing our resources to helping address these disparities—from advocating for additional parks and paths, to storm-proofing critical infrastructure in the lower Mystic to building social resilience to help communities better prepare for extreme weather. Part of these efforts are ensuring that we are working with and listening to our diverse communities—including the EJ community.

We ask that the members of the Conference Committee use this time to demand environmental justice now. We cannot stand aside and continue to punish members of our Commonwealth—forcing them to bear the brunt of dirty water, polluted air and lack of access to information and government. And we cannot continue to ignore the fact that race plays heavily in these inequities.

Thank you for taking this moment to pass this bill with the suggested recommendations from the highly respected Environmental Justice Legislation Table.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Patrick Herron". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Patrick Herron
Executive Director

The Mystic River Watershed Association: The Mystic River Watershed Association works every day to protect our water, restore important habitat, transform our parks and paths, build climate resilience, and inspire youth and community members. This benefits the more than half million residents throughout the 76 square mile watershed—that runs from Reading all the way to Boston Harbor. MyRWA has a staff of 10, board of 15, and engages 6,000 plus community supporters every year. The 21 communities include: Arlington | Belmont | Boston (Charlestown & East Boston) | Burlington | Cambridge | Chelsea | Everett | Lexington | Malden | Medford | Melrose | Reading | Revere | Somerville | Stoneham | Wakefield | Watertown | Wilmington | Winchester | Winthrop | Woburn.

EJ Legislation Table: Neighbor to Neighbor; GreenRoots; Alternatives for Community & Environment; Coalition for Social Justice; Conservation Law Foundation; Clean Water Action; Community Action Works; MA Climate Action Network, Environmental League of MA; Green Energy Consumers Alliance; Better Future Project; Sierra Club of MA, North American Indian Center of Boston; 350 MA; Groundwork Lawrence; Lawyers for Civil Rights; and Healthcare Without Harm.