



## **Environmental Justice Organizations from across Ohio Meet with Local Leaders on Earth Day to Discuss the Future of Climate Justice, Action in Ohio**

Cleveland, Ohio (April 26, 2022) – The Ohio Climate Justice Fund, Promise of Democracy Foundation the Ohio Voter Fund, and the National Wildlife Federation’s Environmental Justice, Climate and Community Revitalization Program organized a virtual community meeting with residents, business leaders and elected officials in from across the state of Ohio to explore an equitable, clean future for all Ohioans. Those in attendance discussed clean energy jobs, public health and environmental justice in addition to how to implement equitable practices throughout the state.

The event was held on Earth Day, April 22, 2022 and included opening remarks from the National Wildlife Federation’s Dr. Mustafa Santiago Ali, vice president of Environmental Justice, Climate and Community Revitalization.

“Out of the first national Earth Day, there were hallmark pieces of legislation, including the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, the Endangered Species Act and more that were implemented to create a safety net of protection around the country,” said Mustafa Santiago Ali. “But this protection did not occur in Black, brown and Indigenous communities at the same level and people continue to be disproportionately impacted. This is an opportunity for a new Earth Day that centers the realities and experiences of vulnerable communities that are on the frontline of environmental degradation.”

“From pipelines and PFAs to wetlands and water, our environmental justice efforts connect with issues like climate-induced flooding and other natural disasters, infrastructure, poverty, food insecurity, and more,” said Simone Lightfoot, associate vice president of environmental justice and climate justice at the National Wildlife Federation, “Our work connects local conservation concerns and stakeholders with resources and organizations to help them thrive. We’re excited to partner with the Promise of Democracy Foundation and the Ohio Climate Justice Fund to engage in this listen, lead and share community forum to hear community members define what climate justice is for themselves.”

“Our virtual forum on Earth Day 2022 in conjunction with the National Wildlife Federation was a fitting climax to our year-long efforts to engage community leaders in dialogues around the issues of environmental justice through a racial justice lens,” said Greg Moore, president of the Promise of Democracy Foundation. “Through all of our listening sessions I was amazed at the

level of awareness and consciousness that all our participants demonstrated around the climate justice issues that continue to impact their communities on a daily basis. Our sincere thanks to our partnership with the Ohio Climate Justice Fund and all of our community partners including the National Wildlife Federation, Black Environmental Leaders, the Lee-Harvard Community Center, the Ohio Environmental Council, the Alliance for Great Lakes and UnBar Café.”

The Ohio Climate Justice Fund’s Listen, Lead, and Share (LLS), is a statewide grassroots campaign that includes a goal of hosting public conversations with community members and stakeholders about the best and most effective ways to address climate and environmental justice in their communities. Intentional and authentic community listening is the first step in organizing grassroots support of equitable clean energy policies.

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### **About the Ohio Climate Justice Fund**

The OCJF is complemented by an advisory committee of Ohio environmental advocates and leaders whose charge is to advise and guide investments in Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) organizations in Ohio, working at the intersection of racial justice and climate action. Launched with seed funding and support from the George Gund Foundation, Energy Foundation and the Cleveland Foundation, the OCJF advances accessible community education and community listening efforts centered on creating a sustainable, equitable future for Ohio.

### **About the Promise of Democracy Foundation and Ohio Voter Fund**

The Promise of Democracy Foundation (PDF) and its state affiliate the Ohio Voter Fund (OVF) develops and implements non-partisan civic engagement, voting rights and non-partisan election administration programs across the state of Ohio. PDF and OVF works in collaboration with national, state and local networks, coalitions and allied partners to advance public policy initiatives that impact African Americans, and underserved communities of color. Our issue focus includes voting rights, redistricting reform, environmental justice, criminal justice reform, access to health care, behavioral health care and wellness and increased access to higher education.

### **About the National Wildlife Federation Environmental Justice, Climate, and Community Revitalization Program**

The Federation’s environmental justice initiatives build upon over a decade of relationship building and community engagement. Our environmental justice program is rooted in race and social justice by design. The program is underpinned by a philosophy of listening before talking, giving before asking, sharing resources, and building community capacity. We intentionally prioritize, amplify, and include policy solutions, views, and voices of Black, Indigenous, Latine, Asian, Pacific Islander, and people of color and lower wealth communities. We invest the time and cultural respect required to build authentic relationships and connect our policy and

advocacy efforts to those communities severely impacted by climate change. Learn more by visiting [nwf.org/environmentaljustice](https://www.nwf.org/environmentaljustice).