



To: Manish Bapna  
President & CEO  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
1152 15th Street NW, Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20005

September 22, 2023

CC: NRDC Executive Leadership Team

Dear Manish and NRDC Leadership,

Earlier today, our representatives at the Washington-Baltimore News Guild (WBNG) delivered a letter to you announcing that a majority of union-eligible NRDC staff support the formation of an NRDC union. We now seek your acknowledgement of WBNG's letter, your cooperation with the wishes of the majority of your union-eligible workers, and your voluntary recognition of this union.

NRDC leadership has long embraced the importance of labor unions in achieving just and effective outcomes both for their members and their institutions as a whole. Our organization has stood in solidarity with unions for many years under the BlueGreen Alliance and continues to align itself with current labor movements. Just this week, NRDC published a statement to its website that it "Stands with Striking Autoworkers." We were heartened to see NRDC's President and CEO write on social media that "We support workers' rights to bargain collectively" and that "we stand in solidarity" with UAW. One week ago, NRDC DEI leadership celebrated the beginning of Latine and Hispanic Heritage Month by highlighting the union legacies of Dolores Huerta, Cesar Chavez, the United Farm Workers Association, and the Japanese-Mexican Labor Association. We are now asking you to put your stated values into practice by voluntarily recognizing the NRDC Union. Together, we can work in partnership toward shaping a brighter and more just future, not only for all NRDC employees, but for the environment and all of the people in it.

Hundreds of NRDC staff have reached the conclusion that a union is a necessary pathway towards creating a just and equitable future where all staff at NRDC can thrive and have a say in the decisions that affect our livelihoods. NRDC has adopted Donna Hicks' definition of dignity as "the mutual recognition of the desire to be seen, heard, listened to, and treated fairly; to be recognized, understood, and to feel safe in the world." Unionization at NRDC would support a dignified treatment of staff by creating and sustaining a mechanism for us to be seen, share our insights and concerns, and have those incorporated into leadership's plans. It would allow us to collectively and democratically bargain on issues that affect us all and allow us to shape what NRDC's future looks like.

Many staff currently feel that their dignity and wellbeing – or that of their coworkers – is not being adequately considered in today's climate at NRDC. Staff have expressed concerns around fair and transparent compensation, career development, NRDC's commitment to equity in its advocacy, and, critically, its treatment of staff of marginalized communities, notably staff of color, staff with disabilities, and LGBTQIA2S+ staff. Our organization's leadership has repeatedly invoked the term "accountability" as a key value in their restructuring process but there is no meaningful venue for those affected to express their priorities or values in the decision-making process. For example, layoffs are expected to occur as soon as next week; yet neither the criteria for selection, the terms of severance, nor the number of those impacted have been revealed to us. As a result of this lack of transparency, nearly all of us on-staff have had to guess at the likelihood of our departure and decide whether to plan for the possibility that we will have no job, no income, and no healthcare this time next month – all while continuing to do our jobs to help make NRDC as successful as it can be.

This is just one example of inequity and lack of transparency that a union could help to rectify. A union is a tool by which employees can engage in meaningful dialogue with leadership. Our recognition will help us to meet the goal of truly centering equity at NRDC, ensuring that those who are underrepresented among leadership – due to race, gender, necessary accommodations, role, or seniority – have a voice at the table. As layoffs approach, our immediate priorities at this time are to uplift the fairness and dignity concerns that are wrapped up in severance pay determinations, appeals

processes, and in continuity of the health insurance plans that we and our families rely on. Further out, as we navigate restructuring, our goal is for the union to be a mechanism to incorporate staff's project-specific, on-the-ground expertise into the reorganization process.

We ask for your recognition of our desire to collectively bargain as a union, not to undermine NRDC's mission but to *advance* it. We believe in and care about this work, and we do the work better when we believe in and care about each other. As Manish wrote to all staff when this unionizing effort became public, NRDC is "an organization rooted in progressive values," which "support[s] the role of organized labor in promoting economic justice and protecting workers and their families." In that spirit, we call on NRDC leadership to voluntarily recognize the NRDC Union so that we can begin the important work of strengthening this organization, outside and from within, together.

Sincerely,

The NRDC Union Organizing Committee  
NRDCunion@gmail.com