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January 28, 2016

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Chairman Phil Mendelson
Council of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Suite 504
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Chairman Mendelson:

This is a remarkable moment in human history – a time of both optimism and concern about the future of civilization.

Last month in Paris, nearly 200 countries agreed to an historic deal to limit climate-altering emissions. In an unprecedented way, the Paris Agreement brought together nearly every national government in the world with specific plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, transition to a renewable energy economy, and adapt to a degree of warming that is already unavoidable.

Yet 2015 was the Earth's warmest year on record (i.e., since 1880), and our climate woes continue to worsen. Syria's current civil war and the consequent refugee crisis were fueled in great part by historic drought in recent years, which resulted in massive crop failures. This winter, an unusually strong El Nino contributed to extreme weather events worldwide, including above-freezing temperatures at the North Pole.

It is clear that much more needs to be done to reduce greenhouse gases and mitigate the worst effects that climate change will bring in the future. And yet fossil fuel companies continue to explore and develop additional resources, when they already have in hand at least three times more than can ever be used if we are serious about stabilizing global temperatures. This madness must stop.

Some of the strongest leadership on climate change has come from states and cities – from California to New York City. Washington, DC, is making remarkable advances through its Sustainable DC plan, through which Mayors Vincent Gray and Muriel Bowser have promised to “take bold and concrete steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.”

At an event alongside the Paris climate talks, the District was honored by the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group for its commitment to purchase green power – enough wind to supply one third of the government's needs and enough renewable energy certificates to cover the rest.

And yet the DC Government still has millions of dollars invested in fossil fuel companies whose core business will make the problem worse – including many who have actively sought to muddy the issue. What sense does it make to devote the city’s resources to climate action on one hand, but invest in companies that profit from a lack of real progress?

In November, the DC Council introduced the Fossil Fuel Divestment Act of 2015, which would commit the District to removing investments in the top 200 fossil fuel companies from the DC Retirement Fund and the Annuitants' Health and Life Insurance Policy Trust Fund. A majority of Councilmembers have co-sponsored the bill. Before the Council can vote, however, you must bring the bill to a vote in committee. I urge you to do so.

By divesting from fossil fuels, the District would join more than 500 municipalities, schools, non-profits, foundations, and corporations that have taken a stand against polluting fossil fuel companies by divesting a collective \$3.4 trillion in assets, shielding their investments from the volatility of fossil fuels.

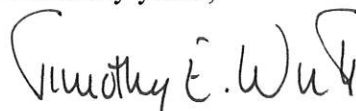
The writing is on the wall for fossil fuels; as governments take the steps enumerated in the Paris Agreement, returns on these investments will continue to crumble. Divestment is therefore not just morally and politically the right thing to do, but is financially proactive as well.

The Agreement calls for “making finance flows consistent with a pathway towards low greenhouse gas emissions and climate-resilient development.” Coupled with the Agreement’s objective of getting net greenhouse gas emissions down to zero by the second half of the century; this is an implicit endorsement of fossil fuel divestment.

In light of these global imperatives, I ask you to allow the bill to move forward in committee, and urge the D.C. Council to heed the call from Paris and continue the city’s leadership on climate change by passing the proposed Fossil Fuel Divestment Act of 2015.

With best wishes,

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy E. Wirth". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Timothy E. Wirth

Cc: DC Councilmembers