

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

March 3, 2022

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Vice Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Chair
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Leahy, Vice Chairman Shelby, Chairwoman DeLauro and Ranking Member Granger:

As you negotiate a final appropriations package for Fiscal Year (FY) 2022, we respectfully urge you to adopt the House approved language in the FY 2022 Interior Appropriations bill, which provides \$165 million for the Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization (AMLER) Program.

Formerly known as the AML Pilot Program, AMLER was created in 2016 to both reclaim abandoned mine lands and spur economic development. Across the country, coal communities are struggling to cope with the dramatic decline in coal production. Unlike investments through the Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Reclamation Program, the AMLER program is uniquely beneficial because of the intentional coordination of economic development and AML remediation. For example, the first AML Pilot project in the country was the Ehrenfeld project in Ehrenfeld, Pennsylvania, which eliminated nearly 70 acres of a refuse pile covering the remaining developable land while employing 40 dislocated coal miners for more than three years. This reclamation project not only addressed hazardous conditions in the community, but also addressed a source of acid mine drainage and provided safer access to walking trails, creating new opportunities for the outdoor recreation and tourism economy.

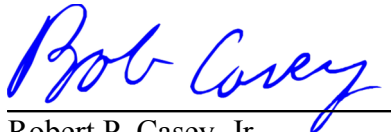
As another example, the Reclaiming Appalachia Coalition, a multi-state coalition established to promote innovative AML projects, has supported 17 AMLER-funded projects, ranging from the development of modern industrial facilities, to trail systems, regional tourism attractions and state of the art agricultural facilities. Economic modeling suggests that these projects alone will have a total impact of \$82.3 million in economic output, support 524 jobs and provide \$22.6 million in earnings to employees. The closure of the Black Mesa and Kayenta coal mines devastated the Navajo Nation economy and caused millions of dollars in economic damage. The AMLER program on the Navajo Nation was awarded \$3.3 million that represents a promising start to the long process of economic recovery.

The AMLER program is the type of economic stimulus needed in coal communities. However, the program is significantly oversubscribed. For example, in West Virginia alone, in 2021, 59 project applications were submitted from 21 counties, requesting a total of \$216 million. Only \$25 million was available for the state. In Kentucky, there were over 70 applications in 2020 for the program, but only 9 were able to be funded. There is significant potential and need for this program.

Coal communities have what it takes to retool and put their residents back to work, but proximity to abandoned mines poses significant challenges to their health, safety and economic development goals. The AMLER Program demonstrates that deliberate investment in AML cleanup will have strong economic benefits, providing new opportunities for land use, outdoor recreation and energy development within coal communities.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Glenn "GT" Thompson
Member of Congress



Joe Manchin III
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Tim Ryan
Member of Congress



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



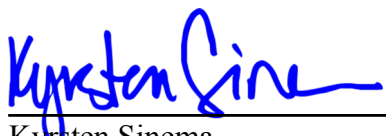
Conor Lamb
Member of Congress



John Yarmuth
Member of Congress



Mike Doyle
Member of Congress



Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator



Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress



Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress