

January 31, 2023

Mayor Amy Goodwin
City of Charleston
501 Virginia St E.

Charleston, WV 25301

Re: Consumer Recycling Education and Outreach (REO) Grant Program in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)

Dear Mayor Goodwin,

We commend your administration's efforts in revitalizing Charleston and improving sustainability and resiliency in the city, including your collaboration within the Appalachian Climate Technology Coalition and the announcement of the transformation of the Kanawha Manufacturing Plant into a Learning, Innovation, Food, and Technology Center. These types of initiatives help Charleston stand out as a leader and model in the state on promoting sustainability at the municipal level.

We write to bring your attention to an opportunity for the City of Charleston to apply for the [Consumer Recycling Education and Outreach \(REO\) Grant Program](#) created by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), with a deadline of February 15, 2023.

Municipalities in West Virginia have an unprecedented opportunity to benefit from the historic passage and implementation of the IIJA to create good jobs that improve the health of our environment and economy. We applaud the roll out of the new recycling bins in the City of Charleston, which has led to a significant increase in municipal recycling so that an additional trip to Beckley Recycling Center needed to be added, according to minutes from the Charleston Green Team meeting in January 2023. The REO grant program could build upon the progress of the City of Charleston's recycling initiative by improving the effectiveness of residential and community recycling and composting programs through public education and outreach. Providing \$75 million total in the IIJA from Fiscal Year 2022 to 2026, "projects funded through the REO grant program will: (1) inform the public about residential or community recycling or composting programs; (2) provide information about the materials that are accepted as part of residential or community recycling or composting programs; and (3) increase collection rates and decrease contamination across the nation."

For example, the REO grant program could support the hiring of a Sustainability Outreach Coordinator to support the City's recycling and sustainability efforts with the following responsibilities:

1. Coordinate internally among the Administration and City agencies to set ambitious strategic goals for sustainability and recycling.
2. Conduct recycling and sustainability community outreach.
3. Work toward zero-waste policies in city-owned buildings.
4. Partner with emerging recycling opportunities such as Glass Smash, to increase glass recycling.
5. Identify new opportunities to help city residents recycle “hard to recycle” items such as batteries and appliances.
6. Increase data collection to inform future Department of Public Works decisions concerning City of Charleston recycling, including but not limited to identifying methods to bring processing within city limits.

The EPA is allocating at least 40% of the grant to projects that serve disadvantaged communities. Charleston is identified in the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST) as a disadvantaged community. We believe that the proposed project fits strongly within the goal of improving recycling participation and outcomes for environmental justice communities.

The West Virginia Rivers Coalition is the statewide organization focused on promoting the overall health of West Virginia’s waters and their downstream benefits. At the forefront of environmental policy discussions in West Virginia, WV Rivers is motivated by the preservation and improvement of water quality through programs focused on water, public lands, and climate change. The West Virginia Center on Budget and Policy is a policy research organization that is nonpartisan, nonprofit, and statewide producing research and analysis designed to support informed public dialogue and policy in West Virginia. Since inception, Our Future West Virginia (OFWV) has historically worked to address the following issues: Education, Healthcare, Civic Engagement, and Poverty. In 2021 OFWV expanded work to include the Environment, which is critically important given the extractive and polluting industries that have driven our state economy for generations. The West Virginia Citizen Action group has advocated for better public policy, rights of individuals, a clean environment, and a stronger democratic process since 1974. Dream.Org is a national organization dedicated to a world beyond pollution, economic inequality, and mass incarceration.

We would enthusiastically support the submission of an application to the IIJA REO grant program and echo the Charleston Green Team’s support for city applications to IIJA and future Inflation Reduction Act opportunities. We were invested in making sure Congress funded these types of grant programs that stand to have great benefits for our state, and hope that Charleston can help lead the way on maximizing the short and long-term benefits of pulling in these funds to West Virginia. We are more than happy to meet to discuss your thoughts on such initiatives, and any ideas you have for how we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Angie Rosser
Executive Director, West Virginia Rivers Coalition

Kelly Allen
Executive Director, West Virginia Center For Budget and Policy

Kathy Ferguson
Interim Executive Director, Our Future West Virginia

Gary Zuckett
West Virginia Citizen Action Group

Quenton King
Dream.Org Green For All

Christy Brown
Glass Smash Sand

