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## Lawmakers Reintroduce Resolution Backing Young Climate Lawsuit Plaintiffs, Need for Climate Recovery Planning

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – A concurrent resolution was reintroduced today, Earth Day, in the United States Senate and House of Representatives to protect the fundamental rights of children to a safe and stable climate.

Recognizing the climate crisis and fundamental rights of the nation's children were Sen. Jeff Merkley (D-OR), chair of the Chemical Safety, Waste Management, Environmental Justice and Regulatory Oversight Subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, and Senate Democrats' Special Committee on the Climate Crisis; Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (IL-09), Senior Chief Deputy Whip and chair of the Consumer Protection and Commerce Subcommittee of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce; Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal (WA-07), vice chair of the Antitrust, Commercial, and Administrative Law Subcommittee of the House Committee on the Judiciary; and Congressman Bobby L. Rush (IL-01), chair of the Energy Subcommittee of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce.

Joining as original co-sponsors of the resolution were nine Senators and 43 Representatives.

In the days leading up to Earth Day, young people from across the country came together to support the resolution's reintroduction by participating in virtual meetings co-hosted by [Our Children's Trust](#), [350.org](#) and the [National Children's Campaign](#). Their mission was to urge members of Congress to recognize their constitutional rights to a safe climate system and demand climate recovery planning.

The Children's Fundamental Rights and Climate Recovery Resolution recognizes that the current climate crisis disproportionately affects the health, economic opportunity, and fundamental rights of children, and demands that the United States develop a national, comprehensive, science-based, and just climate recovery plan to meet necessary emissions reduction targets. The resolution supports the principles underpinning [Juliana v. United States](#), the landmark constitutional climate lawsuit brought by 21 young Americans, and youth climate organization Earth Guardians,

against the executive branch of the federal government for creating a national energy system that causes climate change.

“Every child -- regardless of the color of their skin, the language they speak, their gender identity or their parents’ income -- deserves a healthy and prosperous future,” said Sen. Merkley. “But how are they supposed to thrive if their planet is ravaged by frequent and extreme wildfires and hurricanes, and unprecedented heat waves and droughts? The time is right now to take immediate and decisive steps to stand up for future generations, address the climate crisis, and tackle environmental injustice. To do anything less would be morally reprehensible.”

Congresswoman Schakowsky noted that “Climate change is real, and its effects are happening at an alarming rate. We’re already seeing the devastating effects of the climate crisis, but it’s today’s children and future generations that will have to pay the bill. As leaders of this nation, we have a duty to protect everyone, regardless of age, background, or socio-economic status, from the existential threat of climate change. That’s why I am introducing the Children’s Fundamental Rights and Climate Recovery Resolution, which demands a climate recovery plan that will put the U.S. on a path toward dramatically reducing global atmospheric carbon dioxide by the year 2100. We must uphold the fundamental rights of our children by taking action on climate now. There are multiple, proven, economically feasible ways to reach this target that will prioritize good jobs, equity, and the rights of today’s youth to a stable climate and a planet to call home.”

Congresswoman Jayapal said, “These young leaders seek protections of their constitutional rights to life, liberty, and equal protection under the laws, which includes climate and environmental justice. As we continue to witness catastrophic climate-related events and as they continue escalating, this resolution is more important than ever because children’s rights, futures, and lives are at stake. Today, we stand with young people across this country and we recognize their rights, and the disproportionate impact that the perils of climate change has on children.”

“The devastation of systemic racism and the COVID-19 public health pandemic have ignited a sense of outrage and consciousness for the myriad injustices that persist in our nation,” said Congressman Rush. “Through the reintroduction of this resolution, we continue to shine a bright light on yet another injustice. Vulnerable and environmental justice communities, including communities of color, low-income communities, and indigenous communities, bear the brunt of climate change and are disproportionately exposed to pollution. Blatant disregard for this fact will continue to put the children within these communities, who are especially vulnerable, at greater risk.”

In *Brown v. Board of Education*, children fought for their constitutional rights and sought a court order to desegregate schools. The *Juliana* plaintiffs are similarly fighting for their constitutional rights to a safe climate system so that their generation and future generations can flourish. An additional parallel is evident as today’s youth demand racial justice and environmental justice, two issues especially intertwined given the

disproportionate impact of climate change on Black, Indigenous and people of color, and frontline youth and communities.

In his congressional testimony at the very first U.S. House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis in April 2019, Aji Piper, a youth plaintiff in *Juliana*, said he grew up with the long-lasting consequences of unconstitutional discrimination from government-sanctioned and engineered segregation. "Climate change is no different," Aji noted. "My generation, and generations to come, have the most to lose from the sweeping impacts of climate change. As a result, youth throughout the world have taken the lead in the movement to address this existential threat ... When government sanctions and controls a system that unconstitutionally deprives children of their basic fundamental rights to life, liberty and property, that system must be dismantled, and it is up to all three branches of this federal government to act now while there is still time to uphold the rights of my generation, to stop the perpetuation of intergenerational injustice."

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### **Additional Quotes & Background Info for Journalists**

"To uphold children's fundamental rights, the United States must act swiftly to stave off the worst effects of the climate crisis. The U.S. must commit to climate action on behalf of the millions of young people who have demanded action on the climate crisis for current and future generations. 350.org is in full support of the Children's Fundamental Climate Rights and Recovery Resolution," said Natalie Mebane, Associate Director of U.S. Policy of 350.org.

Jerome Foster II, Executive Director of OneMillionOfUs and youngest member of the White House Environmental Justice Advisory Council said, "We support the Children's Fundamental Rights and Climate Recovery Resolution and the *Juliana v. United States* lawsuit filed by 21 diverse young Americans, including 11 Black, Brown, and Indigenous youth. I stand alongside my generation on the frontlines of this crisis. These courageous trailblazers have generated a call to action that has sparked a change in this country that is far overdue. We call on our nation's leaders to take science-based, equitable, and system-wide actions to address the climate crisis and ensure environmental justice for my entire generation. And for young people at the frontlines of the climate and ecological crisis, that have contributed the least to emissions and have long suffered most from systemic environmental racism and socio-economic injustices."

"It is crucial for our elected officials to recognize and prioritize the rights of young people. The impact climate change is having on young people is clear. This resolution is a first step in the right direction to ensure that young people have the right to a livable future. It is essential that our elected officials and leaders make America's children a priority," said Giovanni Hernandez, Director of Education of the National Children's Campaign.

“Children in the US and around the world have a right to a livable future. We must act now to address the many health risks we are all experiencing as a result of climate change and to avoid irreversible climate peril. Nurses are calling on our elected officials to protect the rights of children and boldly act to counter the impacts of climate change. The Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments supports the Children’s Fundamental Rights and Climate Recovery Resolution because, as nurses, it is our duty to ensure adequate health protections for all people and to advocate for the necessary changes in policies and practices to protect children’s health,” said Katie Huffling, RN, MS, CNM, FAAN, Executive Director of Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments.

“This resolution sends a powerful message to the nation and the Biden-Harris administration that this is a momentous opportunity to change the trajectory of the climate crisis before it is past the point of no return, and in doing so keep the door open to a livable, sustainable and just future for our children,” said Julia Olson, Executive Director and Chief Legal Counsel of Our Children’s Trust, the nonprofit law firm behind the *Juliana v. United States* case and many other climate change lawsuits. “The changing climate promises to be devastating to the health of people — particularly children — in causing illness and death, creating food shortages, destroying property and livelihoods and tanking our economy.”

For the full list of 51 original cosponsors and additional statements of support, click [here](#).

For the full list of more than 70 organizational endorsements and additional statements of support, click [here](#).

Download the fact sheet [here](#).

The Senate and House Concurrent Resolutions will be posted to the Our Children's Trust website [here](#) when they become available.

Learn more about the 21 *Juliana* plaintiffs [here](#).