December 3, 2020

President-Elect Joseph R. Biden
Office of the President-elect
Washington, D.C.

Dear President-Elect Biden,

The National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA), comprised of over forty of the leading national Hispanic civil rights and public policy organizations, has come together to enthusiastically endorse Dr. Cecilia Martinez, Co-founder and Executive Director at the Center for Earth, Energy, and Democracy (CEED), to be nominated as the next Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ).

At a time when systemic inequality in the enforcement of our environmental protection laws is literally a determining factor on who can survive COVID-19, we need a leader who has dedicated her life’s work to fighting for justice and equity in environmental policy and that leader is Dr. Martinez. Her deep understanding of environmental policy, academic expertise, hands-on experience working with environmental justice communities across the country, and her ability to bring together all of the sectors that make up the environmental movement, make her eminently qualified for this vital role. Dr. Martinez brings a wealth of experience and expertise to the position and would provide bold, effective leadership of CEQ on behalf of all the constituencies it serves.

The Biden-Harris environmental agenda recognizes the impact of systemic inequality in our environmental laws, and the incoming administration shares a greater vision of environmental justice than any administration in U.S. history. President-Elect Biden recognized that depth of experience when he tapped Dr. Martinez to lead the agency review team charged with evaluating the White House Council on Environmental Quality – the key post in coordinating the crafting of new environmental regulations. These issues are a matter of life and death in many of our communities and that is why our organizations came together to strongly encourage the President-Elect to nominate Dr. Martinez as Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality to make good on that agenda.

Dr. Martinez demonstrated her ability to work effectively to reach common ground with her groundbreaking work on the groundbreaking Equitable & Just National Climate Platform that brought together a group of environmental justice and national environmental group advocates to build trust and collaboration, develop policy ideas all could support, and create pathways for future inclusive policy development. Dr. Martinez was key to launching this initiative and through her tenacity and commitment, they were able to come together to reach a historic agreement on key climate principles for the benefit of all. For this and her other significant achievements, she was named as Time Magazine’s most influential 100 people of 2020.
There has never been a Chair of CEQ that was an environmental justice leader even though frontline communities suffer the most from local and global environmental degradation. This nation is overdue for leadership at CEQ that not only understands the complexities of the environmental and climate justice sector but is also steeped in the academic world and ready to come to the table with all stakeholders. Dr. Martinez is the complete package; she embodies a unique breadth of experience, has unassailable expertise, is outcome-driven, and has an unwavering commitment to equity.

For all of these reasons and more, Dr. Cecilia Martinez, Co-founder and Executive Director at the Center for Earth, Energy, and Democracy (CEED), is uniquely qualified to be the next Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Thomas A. Saenz  
Chair, National Hispanic Leadership Agenda  
NHLA Immigration Committee Co-Chair  
President & General Counsel  
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF)

Mark Magaña  
Co-Chair, Environmental and Energy Committee, NHLA  
Founding President & CEO, GreenLatinos

Laura Esquivel  
Co-Chair, Environmental and Energy Committee, NHLA  
Vice President, Federal Policy and Advocacy, Hispanic Federation