September 2, 2020

The Commission on Presidential Debates
1200 New Hampshire Avenue NW
Suite 445
Washington, DC 20036

Dear Co-Chairs and Members of the Board,

Every two years, we run for election. While it is always our responsibility to represent our constituents, during those times we must make the case that we are the individuals best prepared to continue fighting for their livelihoods and safety.

One of the great honors of being a Member of Congress is we are closely connected to the neighborhoods and towns we serve. People can -- and often do -- come up to us in supermarkets, local businesses, or at community events to press for answers on the issues that matter most to them. It is a wonderful example of democracy in action.

Our constituents are not, however, often afforded the same opportunities to press presidential and vice-presidential candidates on the issues. But hearing from the individuals seeking the highest offices in the land is no less important than hearing from us. In the 2020 election, our constituents need to hear from President Trump, Vice President Biden, Vice President Pence, and Senator Harris about how they will address one of the most pressing and all-consuming issues currently facing our country: the climate crisis.

This is why we are writing to you today -- as Members of Congress, community leaders, and Americans. We need you to provide that opportunity to voters. In 2016, there was not a single question on climate change in any of the four presidential and vice-presidential debates. This cannot happen again.

The Commission on Presidential Debates must make climate change a centerpiece of the upcoming presidential and vice-presidential debates. Given the dire nature of the crisis, we ask that you break precedent and publicly call on the moderators to include climate in the topics that will be addressed during the debates.

This is not a partisan issue. Republicans, Democrats, Independents, and politically unaffiliated Americans have all told us that climate change and its consequences to their health, pocketbooks, and safety are a major concern for them in this election year. They have a strong desire to hear directly from the candidates on how they plan to address climate change if elected.

Climate change is no longer an issue that is looming in the distance. It is here, and it is being felt acutely right now. We see it in the wildfires ravaging the west, the heatwaves gripping much of the nation, the hurricanes and derechos devastating communities, and extreme flooding and drought threatening lives and livelihoods. Not to mention the grave environmental injustices impacting people of color, who often experience the effects of climate change first and most
acutely. Rising pollution levels are impacting almost half the country, including 74 million people of color.

We understand there are four central crises that the presidential and vice-presidential candidates must address: the ongoing pandemic, a struggling economy, racial injustice, and the climate crisis. But of these four, there is one which will exacerbate each of the other three, if not addressed immediately. We need a dedicated discussion on the climate crisis that matches the importance of this moment.

Sincerely,

/s/
MIKE LEVIN
Member of Congress

/s/
STENY H. HOYER
Member of Congress

/s/
HAKEEM JEFFRIES
Member of Congress

/s/
PETE AGUILAR
Member of Congress

/s/
JULIA BROWNLEY
Member of Congress

/s/
COLIN ALLRED
Member of Congress

/s/
SALUD CARBAJAL
Member of Congress

/s/
CINDY AXNE
Member of Congress

/s/
SEAN CASTEN
Member of Congress

/s/
NANETTE DIAZ BARRAGÁN
Member of Congress

/s/
GILBERT R. CISNEROS JR.
Member of Congress

/s/
EARL BLUMENAUER
Member of Congress

/s/
GERALD E. CONNOLLY
Member of Congress

/s/
SUZANNE BONAMICI
Member of Congress

/s/
ANGIE CRAIG
Member of Congress

/s/
ANTHONY BROWN
Member of Congress

/s/
CHARLIE CRIST
Member of Congress
/s/ JASON CROW
Member of Congress

/s/ JIM HIMES
Member of Congress

/s/ SHARICE L. DAVIDS
Member of Congress

/s/ CHRISSY HOULAHAN
Member of Congress

/s/ MADELEINE DEAN
Member of Congress

/s/ JARED HUFFMAN
Member of Congress

/s/ VAL DEMINGS
Member of Congress

/s/ PRAMILA JAYAPAL
Member of Congress

/s/ DEBBIE DINGELL
Member of Congress

/s/ DANIEL T. KILDEE
Member of Congress

/s/ LLOYD DOGGETT
Member of Congress

/s/ DEREK KILMER
Member of Congress

/s/ VERONICA ESCOBAR
Member of Congress

/s/ ANDY KIM
Member of Congress

/s/ DWIGHT EVANS
Member of Congress

/s/ RAJA KRISHNAMOORTHI
Member of Congress

/s/ SYLVIA R. GARCIA
Member of Congress

/s/ SUSIE LEE
Member of Congress

/s/ RAUL M. GRIJALVA
Member of Congress

/s/ BARBARA LEE
Member of Congress

/s/ DEB HAALAND
Member of Congress

/s/ ANDY LEVIN
Member of Congress
/s/
ROBERT C. “BOBBY” SCOTT
Member of Congress

/s/
DONNA E. SHALALA
Member of Congress

/s/
ADAM SMITH
Member of Congress

/s/
DARREN SOTO
Member of Congress

/s/
KATHY CASTOR
Member of Congress

/s/
PAUL D. TONKO
Member of Congress

/s/
NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ
Member of Congress

/s/
PETER WELCH
Member of Congress

/s/
SUSAN WILD
Member of Congress