

**No. 18-36082**

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**IN THE UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR THE NINTH CIRCUIT**

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KELSEY CASCADIA ROSE JULIANA, et al.,  
*Plaintiffs-Appellees,*

v.

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, et al.,  
*Defendants-Appellants.*

On Appeal from the United States District Court  
for the District of Oregon  
No. 6:15-cv-01517-AA  
Hon. Ann Aiken

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**BRIEF OF AMICUS CURIAE  
SUNRISE MOVEMENT EDUCATION FUND**

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## **CORPORATE DISCLOSURE AND RULE 29 STATEMENT**

Pursuant to Rule 26.1 of the Federal Rules of Appellate Procedure, *amicus curiae* Sunrise Movement Education Fund respectfully submits the following disclosures:

Sunrise Movement Education Fund, a corporation organized and existing under the laws of the District of Columbia, is a national nonprofit organization mobilizing young people to stop climate change. Sunrise Movement Education Fund has no parent companies, and no publicly held company has a 10% or greater ownership interest in Sunrise Movement Education Fund.

*Amicus curiae* Sunrise Movement Education Fund received the written consent of all parties to file this brief. No counsel for any party authored any part of this brief, and no party, their counsel, or anyone other than Sunrise Movement Education Fund has made a monetary contribution intended to fund its preparation or submission.

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## STATEMENT OF INTEREST OF AMICI CURIAE

Sunrise Movement Education Fund (“Sunrise Movement”) submits this amicus curiae brief<sup>1</sup> pursuant to Fed. R. App. P. 29 in support of Plaintiffs-Appellees *Juliana et al.*

Sunrise Movement is a tax-exempt, nonprofit organization founded and operated to empower youth to take action in response to the climate crisis. It consists of ordinary young people scared about what the climate crisis means for the people and places they love, who are building a movement to ensure the government protects the health and well-being of all people from catastrophic climate change.

To advance its mission to mitigate climate change, Sunrise Movement operates through youth-oriented political advocacy. Sunrise Movement organizes actions across the country, for instance visits to Capitol Hill to educate policymakers regarding climate change. Recently, members of Sunrise Movement advocated for the Green New Deal. Major publications and television outlets cover Sunrise Movement’s actions, turning public discussion towards climate change and the role of youth in the United States.

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<sup>1</sup> Sunrise Movement and the authors of this brief are grateful to Braden Crimmins of Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. Braden, a high school student, helps to manage an organization called Engage18, which is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization founded by high school students that seeks to help young people become more engaged in issues affecting their lives. Braden solicited and compiled the essays attached to this brief, which demonstrate how climate change impacts young people.

To advance climate policies that do not infringe upon our fundamental freedoms, Sunrise Movement submits this brief to make student voices heard about an issue of paramount importance to our futures. Student voices, while important in every aspect of our decision-making process, are especially germane in this case, which will determine whether we have a climate suitable to our needs which we might one day inherit and pass on to our children in turn. Sunrise Movement therefore has a clear interest in the proceedings.

### **SUMMARY OF THE ARGUMENT**

Juliana and other youth plaintiffs have asserted concrete and particularized injuries inflicted as a direct result of the Defendants' refusal to protect its youth from the harmful impacts of climate change, in violation the public trust doctrine<sup>2</sup>. Defendants wrongly characterize the injuries as mere "concerns" and "generalized grievances." Defendants' Opening Brief 14-15 (internal quotation marks omitted). While climate change is a widely shared harm, young people are impacted individually.

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<sup>2</sup> We agree with Plaintiffs' arguments about the existence of a substantive due process climate right and state-created danger liability, but our focus in this brief is on standing framed by the public trust doctrine.

Sunrise Movement gathered more than thirty essays written by members under the age of eighteen to highlight the particular harms young people endure because of climate change, which are referenced in this brief and included in full in an appendix.<sup>3</sup> These essays demonstrate that the harm climate change causes to young people such as the plaintiffs is real and specific to each young person who suffers it.

## ARGUMENT

### **I. Defendants’ conduct substantially impairs public trust resources and does not protect them for future generations. This conduct harms individual young people more acutely than older people and constitutes a violation of their rights.**

In their Answering Brief, Plaintiffs argue that they have adequately pleaded a public trust doctrine claim that applies to the atmosphere and to federally-controlled waters like the territorial seas. 54-61. They also argue that the district court “correctly recognized an unenumerated climate right underpinning other recognized substantive due process rights” and “properly asserted a state-created danger claim”. *Id.* We associate ourselves with and incorporate those arguments. Below, we provide some elaboration on the public trust doctrine to frame our main argument, which is that young people have standing to address climate change impacts because those

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<sup>3</sup> For the Court’s reference and convenience, and based on a reading of the applicable rules and a call with a Ninth Circuit filing clerk, we are attaching the full set of essays as an appendix.

impacts harm each young person individually and uniquely depending on where they live and what they value.

The public trust doctrine designates the government as a trustee over certain natural resources for both current and future generations of the public. *See Ill. Cent. R.R. Co. v. Illinois*, 146 U.S. 387, 459 (1892). The federal public trust resources include federal navigable and territorial waters and logically extend to the earth's atmosphere. The Plaintiffs as well as Sunrise Movement's members are beneficiaries of that trust and have the right to benefit from the trust resources. The government is not merely authorized by the doctrine to protect trust resources – it is required to do so and cannot “abdicate its trust over property in which the whole people are interested.” *Id.* at 453. When the Government actively damages the atmosphere and the climate system, it deprives the trust beneficiaries of that right. When the Government harms the youngest of the trust beneficiaries by actively damaging the climate system, the violation is that much more pronounced as young beneficiaries are more reliant on the trust resources, more vulnerable to climate change harms, and will have to endure the harms longer.

**II. While the harms resulting from climate change are widely shared, young people have standing to challenge Defendants’ harm to the atmosphere and climate system because those harms impact individual young people in particular ways and perhaps more so than older cohorts.**

To vindicate their due process rights and ensure that Defendants meet their obligations under the public trust doctrine, plaintiffs must establish injury in fact.<sup>4</sup> *Lujan v. Defenders of Wildlife*, 504 U.S. 555, 560-61 (1992). An injury in fact is “an invasion of a legally protected interest which is (a) concrete and particularized . . . and (b) actual or imminent, not conjectural or hypothetical.” *Id.* at 560 (citations and internal quotation marks omitted). A “generalized grievance” shared by the public is not an injury in fact. *Id.* at 575. However, “where a harm is concrete, though widely shared, the court has found injury in fact.” *Fed. Election Comm’n v. Akins*, 524 U.S. 11, 24 (1998).

Plaintiffs correctly assert that their “injuries are *not* ‘generalized,’ but rather deeply personal and actualized[.]” Plaintiffs’ Answering Brief at 10 (filed Feb. 22, 2019) (emphasis original). Because of Defendants’ actions, climate change is harming young people all over the country. While climate change harm is widely shared, it is concrete and particular for individual young persons. “[S]tanding is not to be denied simply because many people suffer the same injury.... To deny standing to

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<sup>4</sup> Plaintiffs also must show causation and redressability, but the focus of this amicus brief is on the injury in fact that young people already are suffering because Defendants have harmed the atmosphere and climate system.

persons who are in fact injured simply because many others are also injured, would mean that the most injurious and widespread Government actions could be questioned by nobody.” *Massachusetts v. EPA*, 549 U.S. 497, 526 n.24 (2007).

Plaintiffs are challenging the Government’s harm to the atmosphere and climate system because the prospect of catastrophic climate change has made them anxious about their futures and fearful that the world they will inherit from their parents will be uninhabitable by the end of this century. Those harms are concrete and particularized and more than sufficient to confer standing, even though they are widely-shared among today’s youth.

“[I]t does not matter how many persons have been injured by a challenged action” if “the party bringing...suit show[s] that the action injures him in a concrete and personal way.” *Id.* at 517 (quoting *Lujan*, 504 U.S. at 581) (Kennedy, J., concurring) (taken from Plaintiffs’ Answering Brief at 12-13). According to the Supreme Court, “widely shared” harms are not “generalized grievances” if they are real and personal to the persons suffering them.

The Ninth Circuit has applied the principle time and again that wide-shared harms are not generalized grievances. *Novak v. United States*, 795 F.3d 1012, 1018 (9th Cir. 2015); *Jewell v. Nat’l Sec. Agency*, 673 F.3d 902, 910 (9th Cir. 2011); *Newdow v. Lefevre*, 598 F.3d 638, 642 (9th Cir. 2010), cert. denied, 562 U.S. 1271 (2011); *Catholic League for Religious & Civil Rights v. City of San Francisco*, 624

F.3d 1043, 1048 (9th Cir. 2010). *See also, Rocky Mountain Farmers Union v. Corey*, 730 F.3d 1070, 1080-81 (9th Cir. 2013) (noting in the greenhouse gas emission context “[t]hat [although] these climate change risks are widely shared[, that] does not minimize [California’s] interest in reducing them.”) (internal citations and quotation marks omitted).

Other circuits support the holdings of the Ninth Circuit to grant standing to plaintiffs for widely-shared injuries. *Baur v. Veneman*, 352 F.3d 625, 635 n.9 (2d Cir. 2003) (where plaintiff complained of food labeling that harmed him personally, the court stated that where a concrete harm is “widely shared” “there is no additional requirement that a plaintiff demonstrate enhanced susceptibility to establish constitutional standing.”); *Schuchardt v. President of the United States*, 839 F.3d 336, 345-47 (3d Cir. 2016) (holding that although a government surveillance program’s harms were widely shared, the harm was personal to the plaintiffs); *Bishop v. Bartlett*, 575 F.3d 419, 424-26 (4th Cir. 2009) (holding that while government’s deprivation of the right to vote affected all residents of a city, it was sufficient that the plaintiff alleged the harm done to him individually); *American Civil Liberties Union v. Nat’l Sec. Agency*, 493 F.3d 644, 707 (6th Cir. 2007) (holding that while government surveillance program affected attorneys everywhere, there was no “generalized grievance” where attorney-plaintiffs pleaded harm to them individually); *Judge v. Quinn*, 612 F.3d 537, 545 (7th Cir. 2010) (holding that although voting rights harms were

widely shared, there is no “generalized grievance” when plaintiffs alleged specific harm to them); *Cutler v. U.S. Dep’t. of Health & Human Servs.*, 797 F.3d 1173, 1180 (D.C. Cir. 2015) (holding that although insurance law may have rendered various insurance plans unlawful, plaintiff avoided alleging a mere generalized grievance by alleging specific harm to himself).

Legal scholarship demonstrates that climate change causes particularized injury that is both widely shared and individualized enough to provide standing to young people. Benjamin Ewing & Douglas A. Kysar, *Prods and Pleas: Limited Government in an Era of Unlimited Harm*, 121 Yale L.J. 350, 389-390 (2011); Michael C. Blumm & Mary Christina Wood, “*No Ordinary Lawsuit*”: *Climate Change, Due Process, and the Public Trust Doctrine*, 67 Am. U. L. Rev. 1, 87 (2017); David S. Green, Article, *Massachusetts v. EPA Without Massachusetts: Private Party Standing in Climate Change Litigation*, 36-FALL *Environs Envtl. L. & Pol’y J.* 35, 62-63 (2012); Ylan Nguyen, Note, *Constitutional Protection for Future Generations from Climate Change*, 23 *Hastings W.-N.W. J. Envtl. L. & Pol’y* 183, 195-96 (2017).

**III. Much like climate change has harmed the youth Plaintiffs, it has also harmed Sunrise Movement’s youth members, who describe that harm in heart-wrenching personal essays.**

Climate change most acutely harms young persons, whose liberty interests are most threatened and who as beneficiaries of public trust resources will need to access those resources longer than older citizens. The Sunrise Movement’s youth member

essays demonstrate how real and personal climate change harm is for them. *See* Appendix. In these essays, young people hauntingly recount the harm they experience already as a result of the Defendants' violation of their substantive due process rights and the Defendants' abdication of their public trust obligations. The Sunrise Movement members provide eye witness accounts of the damage climate change is doing already to the natural world and the resulting injury to their emotional well-being.

Seventeen-year-old Sophia Nolan from Maine experiences the harm from climate change every day. "I've read the flood maps that predict submersion of my downtown, bought half price lobsters from earlier-than-ever hatches, and seen snow-less Januaries." Appendix at 9-10. Sophia's observation about declining lobster populations reflects the facts from *Massachusetts v. EPA*. "The lobster and fishing industries, valued at more than \$740 million annually, and responsible for more than 26,000 Mainers' jobs, are already in decline." *Massachusetts*, 549 U.S. at 522-23 (omitting internal citation). "At seventeen, I know that my family's house may be under water within my lifetime, that my friends will lose their livelihoods, and that the communities I love will face extreme economic and environmental hardship." Appendix at 9-10.

Seventeen-year-old Leon Zha of California describes his inability to see or breathe. "It was like the end of the world. The light was wrong, muted and red. The sun was a dull orange sphere in the sky, blocked by the same particles that stung my

eyes, nose and throat. I could barely breathe.” Appendix 4-5. Leon describes the terrifying experience of surviving the October 2017 Northern California Wildfires. “That week long apocalyptic period is not one that I want to ever experience again, nor is it one that I would ever want the future children of humanity growing up in.” *Id.* The Camp Fire blaze of 2018 began only a month after Leon’s essay, causing approximately 16.5 billion dollars in damage. *Id.* Young people will experience more and more horrifying wildfires in their lives due to the actions the Government takes that worsen climate change and cause billions of dollars in damage every year.

Sixteen-year-old Annie Poole of Washington discusses harm that she fears will only get worse in the future. “I’m still grappling with the idea that my summers on Lake Washington may look different due to climate change. In fact, they already have. For days this summer, the smoke from wildfires prevented anyone in the Seattle area to go outside for an extended period of time.” Appendix 18-19. Not only were Annie and other children unable to recreate outside, but the wildfires potentially damaged their health. “Research shows that changes in climate, leading to hot and dry summers, has increased fire activity, leading to the smoky haze across the Seattle skyline. The air quality was as bad as smoking 7 cigarettes per day.” *Id.* Children are especially vulnerable to health hazards as a result of climate change. Multiple *Juliana* plaintiffs are “injured by worsening asthma and/or allergies; each has been impacted by the annual onslaught of hazardous wildfire smoke in their towns,

which is projected to worsen.” Plaintiffs’ Answering Brief 12 (internal citations omitted).

Seventeen-year-old Marcel McClinton of Houston, Texas speaks to the horrific results of increasingly severe weather events. Marcel experienced firsthand the horrific destruction of Hurricane Harvey. Appendix 16-17. “Harvey was the worst storms our city has seen. My neighborhood was an island, but nearly all of my friends were evacuated, and some are still in the rebuilding process.” *Id.* Hurricane Harvey even hit Marcel’s education. “School was cancelled for 2 weeks, finals were cancelled, and teachers were lighter with grading.” *Id.* “[T]here was simply no way for students to go to school and pretend life was normal knowing full-well they’re homeless with killed pets, and no hope for a better tomorrow.” *Id.* These storms, because of climate change, show no sign of letting up. “Hurricane Harvey brought Houston’s third ‘500 year storm’ in three years.” *Id.* The damage hurricanes cause to the education, property, and families of young people like Marcel are beyond a doubt concrete and particularized.

Sixteen-year-old Natasha Zimmerman from Washington, D.C. laments climate change impacting her athletic pursuits. She begins by describing how much she identifies with the city and the emotional harm she suffers when she consider how climate change is impacting it. Appendix at 20-21. She goes on to discuss the spe-

cific, personal impact to her life in sports. “My crew team, which rows on the Potomac River, loses many practices because the river rises so high after rainfall that it moves too quickly to row upon safely and floods the docks and boathouse.” *Id.*

Fifteen-year-old Ember Penny from North Carolina discusses the pain from living through heat waves that climate change is exacerbating. “Personally, my family farm on which I grew up has been ravaged by recent Summer heats and droughts.” Appendix 13-14. “My parents state that the Summer months did not used to be so damaging, so why do I have to pay the price for prior generations’ inaction?” *Id.*

The Government is depriving young people of their protected liberty interests and mismanaging federal public trust resources by perpetuating a fossil fuel energy system that causes climate change. The Sunrise Movement youth member essays remind us that the harm caused by the Government is individualized, not generalized. Though widely shared, climate change impacts each young person profoundly and differently depending on where they live and what they value.

Young people will require a habitable climate longer than anyone else living. Plaintiffs and the youth members of the Sunrise Movement know that there is no time to wait and that it would be unconscionable to pass the problem to the next generation. Climate change causes individualized harm to Plaintiffs and to the youth

members of the Sunrise Movement. Young people have standing to change their future before climate change irreversibly effects their lives.

### **CONCLUSION**

This Court should uphold the district court's orders and remand to the district court so this matter can proceed to trial.

Date: March 1, 2019

Respectfully submitted,

ENVIRONMENTAL LAW & SUSTAINABILITY CLINIC

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**UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR THE NINTH CIRCUIT**

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## APPENDIX

### Alabama - AL

Alabama, as a state, is facing a highly uncertain future, and so are we, all those of the youngest generation who live here. I know that Alabama has always tried to be a great industrial state, and I am proud of the achievements Alabamians have made in all sectors of the industrial world. But we have to realize that unless we stop damaging the environment beyond our capacity to repair it, all our industrial labors will be for naught. We cannot let our industrial heritage prevent us from taking action to secure our future, and we cannot let our gratitude towards the groups and individuals that make our industrial development possible prevent us from holding them accountable when they are not taking the best interests of our future into account.

In the business world, the ultimate goal is always to streamline production and find better ways to do things. However, for the longest time, we have not impressed upon the owners of our corporations that we want them to take environmental health into account when they plan their strategies... and though some have done this voluntarily, recognizing the problems that we face, we are still not dealing with the destruction that we cause on a large enough scale. Until we force our government and our business owners to recognize that change needs to happen, it will not happen, and we will be unable to deal with the threats that await us... We need to say, with loud and resounding voices, that we want our corporations, and our government, to do so!

- Max Stefanescu (15), Alabama

Upon boarding the boat after my first scuba dive, I asked my dad what the dull parts of the reef were that I had seen. He told me they were the skeletons of the parts of the reef that had died. It took awhile for me to come to terms with this fact. The ocean, the prettiest woman I had ever seen, she

who had enamored me with her seemingly unending supply of life and beauty, had just revealed to me, how she is losing the elements of herself that I had so quickly fallen in love with. I was devastated. I guess everyone is in their first experience with heartbreak.

As an Alabama native, the Gulf of Mexico is a spanse of water that is very familiar and sacred to me. As the Gulf, and other forms of the natural world of Alabama, disappear, parts of myself will disappear with it.

My generation has grown up without hope. We have been raised in hopelessness, and have wrapped ourselves into it. We have adopted it as our own, and have become it, all the same. Since 2011, studies show that teen depression has skyrocketed. Never before in history has the problem of teen mental illness been shown as prevalent as it is in this new generation. There are many factors to this, and the solution is not simple. However, I think being raised in a world without hope, or assurance for the future to come, has taken a large part as the reason for this. Who wants to live in a dying world? Who wants to see tomorrow, if tomorrow is a guaranteed fall?

I may sound pessimistic, but I promise you, I am not. I believe that all things are capable of change. But change takes dedication, and in this case, extreme action. It has now reached a point where if we want real change and hope for the future, it will take legislation, and it must become a priority to our government to instill change into our culture. Please, as a member of those who will see the true results of our actions in this moment, speak out for those who care about the life of Earth, including all of us.

- Olivia Porill (17), Alabama

## **Alaska - AK**

Many believe climate change is theoretical, or, at least, a problem with consequences that will only be seen in years to come. However, in Alaska, climate change is very real and very present.

Across the state, permafrost, ground that is frozen all year, is being lost at an increasingly high rate. When temperatures rise, the ground destabilizes as the ice melts and trapped gases are released. Solid ground loses structural integrity, which puts infrastructure at risk: already, houses have collapsed and roads have crumbled. Permafrost is a part of Alaskan architecture—it lies under a majority of the state—and rising temperatures risk existing and future infrastructure.

Coastal villages face other dangers. These often indigenous communities rely on centuries-old techniques for fishing and whaling for subsistence. These villages have spent generations living off of the sea; their way of life is shaped by it and their culture revolves around it.

But rising temperatures are putting all this at risk; already, flooding has become more common and erosion is tearing away at coastal lands. This is partially due to rising sea levels, but mainly because of the loss of sea ice on the coast. The sea ice acts as a barrier for storms and harsh weather, but as it melts, the land takes the impact, meaning large amounts of land is lost due to extreme weather. The result is a quickly receding coastline.

Some villages in Alaska have already gone through total relocation to avoid these ramifications. Some are even considering a second displacement because their new land is being threatened. Alaska is on the front lines of the battle with climate change, and its effects are already harming the Alaskan environment and way of life. If left unchecked, global warming's impacts will continue to grow, in Alaska, and across the United States.

- Burke Croft (17), AK

## **Arkansas - AR**

I was born and raised in Arkansas, and I am already beginning to see the ways in which climate change is eroding Arkansas's reputation as the Natural State. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, heavy precipitation, severe flooding, and storms are some of the most detrimental

consequences of climate change in Arkansas, which go on to damage properties and infrastructure, depreciate crop yields, and harm livestock. Climate change is increasing the intensity of droughts in Arkansas, further putting pressure on the state's agriculture, one of our most vital economic industries. Human health is also being threatened. Not only are Arkansans at greater risk for heat strokes and dehydration due to hotter air temperatures, but, if climate change is not mitigated, we are likely to see a significant expansion of tick habitats within state borders. There is currently a less than 20% probability of ticks inhabiting Northwest Arkansas, though it is likely to increase to over 80% by 2080. Thus, this increase heightens the threat of contracting Lyme disease in my community, as well as across the entire state. Arkansas is home to me and over three million other citizens. Climate change prevention and mitigation efforts at the individual, local, state, and federal level are imperative to ensure our beloved state's environmental, economic, and social prosperity.

- Iman Blackwell (17), Arkansas

## **California - CA**

"It was like the end of the world. The light was wrong, muted and red. The sun was a dull orange sphere in the sky, blocked by the same particles that stung my eyes, nose, and throat. I could barely breathe.

"To date, the October 2017 Northern California Wildfires included not only the most destructive wildfire in the history of California, but also the costliest. But the potential for even greater destruction is a very real threat. One of the main effects of global warming is changing weather patterns. According to NASA climate models, California, which already lacks an abundance of water, will receive less rainfall as our planet heats up.

"That week long apocalyptic period is not one that I want to ever experience again, nor is it one that I would ever want the future children of humanity growing up in. Climate change is real. It's here, and it's affecting us now. These fires are only the beginning of the devastating consequences that will

occur if global warming is not stopped, or at least slowed down. My future should not be dictated by the carelessness and greed of the previous generations. As a citizen of America, I have the same right to life, liberty, and property as my my forefathers. But what life do I have if I die twenty years early from carcinogenic smog? What liberty, if I must stay indoors all day to avoid the stroke-inducing heat? What property, if the land itself is burned to ash?

“The American Dream demands equal opportunity for prosperity and success, but there can be no equality if future generations cannot have the same opportunities available today. Action must be swift to ensure that humanity's most basic rights remain protected under the Constitution.”

- Leon Zha (17), CA (*Submitted a month before the Camp Fire blaze of 2018, which killed more than three times as many people as the Tubbs Fire described above. The Camp Fire also caused approximately 16.5 Billion in damages, compared to the Tubbs Fire's 1.2 Billion*)

## **Connecticut - CT**

Norwalk, Connecticut is a coastal city that is located off the Long Island Sound. Climate change is not just an air problem. When humans put carbon emissions into the air, that heat is absorbed by the water which causes sea warming. Because the water is heated, it expands and the result is rising sea levels. According to a study, conducted in 2014, called “Salt Marsh Advancement Along Connecticut’s Coast,” homes, buildings, and infrastructure will be destroyed by rising sea levels by 2080. People will be forced to evacuate their homes, with an expected twenty-four thousand acres of land lost to the rising tide, as well as daily flooding on Interstate 95 in high tide, creating a new danger for the roads. This will cause more accidents on roads, and escalate the trend of accidents being the leading cause of death for adolescents. Although I will be in my late seventies by that time, I refuse to let the effects of climate change become the norm for

my children, and future generations until the Earth is in no condition for humans to live in.

- Natalie Ochoa (16), CT

## **Georgia - GA**

Climate change is not a problem that we will face in the distant future; it's a dilemma we are encountering now. While Georgians haven't experienced much of a temperature shift comparatively to the rest of the country, there still has been a substantial change. We encounter various problems such as droughts, increased risk of wildfires, heat waves powerful enough to send people to hospitals, an increased number of hurricanes and a rise in sea level. However, despite the aforementioned, people still deny that climate change poses a threat to humanity, or that a child like me understands the problems we face. That remains falsified. Due to climate change, an increase in disease will occur. Since childhood, I've had a weak immune system, constantly being attacked by illnesses. For people like me, an increase in disease means more than a few extra colds. Also, climate change entails an increase in smog. Having severe asthma means the quantity of pollution in the atmosphere may be the difference between life and death. For the people arguing that a child like me has no idea about the problems that I stated earlier, I respond with this. While, yes, I'm a child, and yes, I may not know as much about the financial issues that may occur while trying to fix this crisis, but I do have common sense. Common sense that tells me that if we continue like this, there may be no humanity. It informs me that burning countless fossil fuels consequently kills off dozens of species every day. So, while I'm just a child, I see enough to know that we are killing ourselves and many others every day. So, no matter the financial burden this climate recovery plan may impose, no amount of money is worth dying for.

- Mridula Sudhakar (14), Georgia

## **Illinois - IL**

“I remember first being truly worried for my future two years ago when I watched President Trump withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement. Until the words physically left his mouth, I had held out the hope that he would reverse the decision, because adults were supposed to fix problems, and he had to understand how big of a mistake he was making. There were no adults in the room, because if there were adults present, they would have realized that denying the role of human involvement in climate change will have detrimental, cataclysmic effects. If society chooses not to believe, invasive species such as the Asian carp that threaten the Great Lakes - that threaten the beaches I splashed in as a child, the lagoons I kayak in to this very day, the wide expanses that my family would rent pontoons to glide over – will finally breach the Great Lakes and spread at a much faster rate, destroying already fragile ecosystems and decimating the thriving fishing industry that relies on the Great Lakes. If society chooses not to believe, already sweltering summers and bitterly cold winters will become even more extreme, making the state unappealing for prospective residents. Flooding will increase in frequency and potency, threatening not just homes but the agricultural industry, which contributes more than \$19 billion to the Illinois economy and employs thousands. However, there were no adults in the room. And so, it is up to us now, the children, because the effects of climate change are not something that will be realized in 1,000 years but something that is already being felt now. This is our present, this is our future, and we have no choice but to fight. Our lives, and the lives of future generations, quite literally depend on it.”

- Madison Hahamy (18), IL

## **Indiana - IN**

I never understood the concept of “ignorance is bliss” before I started to do work advocating for climate justice. I’ve always believed that you should know your enemy, face the problem head-on, and work your hardest to make meaningful change. However, after fighting for environmental justice for

years now, I've found that sometimes I wish I knew nothing about the effects of climate change on our future.

Climate change threatens every single aspect of the lives of modern teenagers. From simply getting a meal with friends to being able to plan for a productive future, our lives will never be the same should climate change continue to degrade the planet. The many luxuries we take for granted will fall prey to the hardships created by climate change, and for these reasons, I am scared for our future. Our lives will be irreparably changed, and unfortunately, the burden falls on the young -- not those who are in power now.

I've realized that my life will be very different from my parents. They were able to pursue whatever life goals they wanted, living free of any types of burdens or restrictions. My life and the lives of all teenagers in today's world will be starkly different. We are burdened by the looming threat of climate change. We have been given the imperative responsibility to solve this crisis, and unfortunately, it has to take precedence over any other ambitions we may have. When I think of my future, I feel a sense of duty to fight climate change. This responsibility is empowering, but at the same time, it feels wrong that we have had this burden placed upon us by previous generations. The future to me is one full of change and sacrifice, one which requires all people to take action for a better future.

- Reed Rouch (18), IN

I started my high school career at Herron High School in Indianapolis, Indiana the August of 2015. I'm now in my senior year, four years later in 2019. Ever since, I haven't had a grade lower than a B. I work hard to keep my grades up. I work hard to be a good student, but lately I've asked myself, "what's the point of all my hard work if there is a potential that it will lead to nothing?"

The risk that climate change is imposing will provoke detrimental effects across the globe if it is not acted upon. Youth all across the world are acting on climate, striking from school, contesting their local and federal

government, and most of all, educating each other. There are countless children who have dreams for their future, who work hard in school to succeed and who aspire to be something bigger than anything that anyone else has ever dreamt of being. I want that to happen and I want to see our generation flourish outside the boundaries of our dreams. Our futures are dependent on the decisions you make, but we have voices too. It's up to you whether they are heard or not.

- Madilyn Swank-Brooks (17), IN

## **Maine - ME**

I've read the flood maps that predict submersion of my downtown, bought half price lobsters from earlier-than-ever hatches, and seen snowless Januaries. Today, the unfolding effects of Climate Change can be seen across the state of Maine: over the last 150 years, the annual average temperature has increased by 3.1 degrees Fahrenheit and sea levels have risen 0.6 feet. The Gulf of Maine has warmed faster than 99% of the world's oceans, and by the end of the century, the environment of Maine is projected to act more like Maryland than northern New England. This climate "migration" will mean increased precipitation, specifically more rain and less snow. Summers are projected to be a week longer, and winters a week shorter, challenging the winter sports and tourism industry. These drastic ecosystem changes will lead to mass migrations of plants and animals, threatening food webs and leading to their collapse. The lobster and fishing industries, valued at more more than \$740 million annually, and responsible for more than 26,000 Mainers' jobs, are already in decline. Everyday, I see these predictions become more tangible, impacting everything from the woods and waters to historic industries and local communities. I've grown up in this reality, knowing that the security of my home is connected to that of the environment. At seventeen, I know that my family's house may be under water within my lifetime, that my friends will lose their livelihoods, and that the communities I love will face extreme economic and environmental hardship. I have to reconcile this reality as I read about the fires ravaging California and the hurricanes destroying Southeast

communities, all the while knowing that government inaction has exacerbated the harm. Climate change is not simply an environmental, partisan issue; it is crisis threatening humanity.

- Sophia Nolan (17), ME

## **Massachusetts - MA**

There is something to be said about living in a coastal state. We, residents, reap the benefits of beautiful beaches with diverse wildlife, increased trade and economic opportunities, and 100s of years of history directly tied to the founding of this nation. However, as the climate continues to change, these benefits will disappear.

Growing up in the Boston area surrounded by top research universities and academia, there has never been a question about the existence of climate change and how it could destroy Massachusetts. Even looking at some of the more noticeable changes, like increased shark activity and attacks around Cape Cod, increase anxieties about the future of the state. Boston is supposed to be covered by the ocean. Without direct action to minimize the effects of climate change and work to reduce causes, one of America's first great cities with unparalleled preserved history. Climate change does not only affect the small animals and plants that can seem inconsequential, although they are not, but it threatens to erase the history and landmarks that brings people from around the country and the world to the great city of Boston helping to harm the economy an, as a result, reduce the quality of living for its residents.

As a young environmental scientist, bringing climate justice to the forefront of political issues is not only a goal of mine but a mission. Without action, the important processes that previously kept the earth in balance will be disrupted and life literally will cease to exist as we know it. It is not only my life in danger, but all residents in Massachusetts are threatened.

- Maya Feldberg-Bannatyne (17), MA

## **Minnesota - MN**

“As the effects of past generations’ rampant pollution continue to haunt us, and corporations and governments continue to recklessly abuse the natural world, the future of our planet is at stake. In Minnesota, climate change and related problems will inevitably mar the environment—ruining it not only for those living, but for all to come. Elevated temperatures from across the state jeopardize communities and regions throughout. Northern Minnesota is especially at risk of temperature increases. The area encompassing Hibbing and Grand Rapids has already seen temperature increases above even national averages. The rest of the state will soon follow suit, facing warmer summers and shorter winters.

“A changing climate will not only disturb native Minnesota wildlife, but will also allow new species and diseases to take root in our state. Both the Lyme and Dutch elm diseases are already spreading farther north, putting humans and nature at risk. Worst of all, climate change will lead to increasingly common and severe precipitation, hail, floods, droughts and storms. As the environmental damage worsens, the human world will suffer too. These extreme conditions threaten infrastructure, recreation, food supply and a plethora of other key systems and will inevitably cost billions of dollars in damage.

“Even as climate change has begun to wreak havoc throughout the state, new polluting developments continue to be established, such as the Line 3 replacement pipeline. The project will not only cross through Native American lands—harming those who have already disproportionality suffered the effects of climate change—but also through untouched natural environments across the state.

“The environment does not belong to us, hence we may not take it away from this generation or future ones. Minnesota cannot wait any longer. For the sake of our lands, our lakes and for all posterity, we must act now.

- Gabriel Kaplan (15), MN

“[I]n 2018 I spent 87 nights sleeping in a tent or under the stars. You see I have spent a large portion of my life outside.

When I was in elementary school my father would take me and my siblings to his childhood home in rural Massachusetts, rather than sleep inside we opted the sleep outside in tents for the entirety of the summer running through the woods, biking on old dirt roads, and swimming at the local pond. When I was old enough I joined a Boy Scout Troop with a reputation of camping outside regardless of the weather; often without a tent.

Through my experiences outdoors I have learned many lessons and skills that I have been able to transfer over into my daily life. Thanks to the time I spent outdoors running, camping, snowboarding, canoeing, and hiking which are some of my favorite pastimes and working with other youths through my summer and winter job as a camp counselor I have found a passion for teaching and working with others. This passion has developed into a career path I plan to pursue next year.

Unfortunately all of this is in jeopardy due to our current President. President Trump has chosen to follow a course of climate recklessness and putting the futures of the natural world in grave danger. President Trump has consistently chosen to put business and short term gains above the environment, which is what I believe to be the greatest classroom.”

- John Bernhardt (17), MN.

## **North Carolina - NC**

“According to the Environmental Protection Agency, the sea rises one inch every decade, which will contribute to beach erosion. The Outer Banks could be decimated by 2100 if action is not taken to protect the environment. Tourism in the Outer Banks alone generates over \$225 million for North Carolina. Moreover, coastal tourism as a whole creates around \$32 billion

for the state. North Carolina's economy would be crippled if beaches are destroyed. Coastal wetlands and ecosystems will also disappear as the sea continues to rise. Salt water from the ocean is projected to move further into wetlands which will impact many different species, including blue crabs, shrimp, southern flounder, and sea trout. These fish are a valuable food source for millions of Americans. In general, as temperatures increase, the ground-level ozone will, too, which can cause humans to develop lung and heart disease. Climate change will impact everyone, and there is little time to halt the imminent damage."

- Lily Levin (17) and Sarah Beck (17), NC

As a youth in America today, the lack of federal action on Climate Change is frightening. My generation, and those that follow, will experience the worst effects of Climate Change. Living in the East-coast state of North Carolina, I have have had to endure worsening hurricanes, such as we have recently experienced with hurricanes Chris, Florence, and Michael in 2018. In fact, last year alone, hurricanes killed over 35 North Carolina citizens. Statistical data projects that this number will only increase as Climate Change is further exacerbated. Not only has there been significant loss of life, but Climate Change is also taking a huge toll on the North Carolina coastal economy. This is due to extreme weather patterns and rising sea levels, all direct effects of Climate Change. Hurricane Florence caused approximately \$17 billion in damages in North Carolina alone. The changing climate will also inevitably impact our tourism industry through the destruction of public beaches which is currently projected to cost \$93 million a year by 2030. However, extreme weather is not the only impact that North Carolina will have to face. Rising temperatures have also proved detrimental to our state. Personally, my family farm on which I grew up has been ravaged by recent Summer heats and droughts. My parents state that the Summer months did not used to be so damaging, so why do I have to pay the price for prior generations' inaction? To combat our changing climate, and to protect my beautiful state, we must get to the root of the issue, namely our carbon emissions. Governor Roy Cooper pledged to reduce greenhouse gas

emissions by 40% by 2025 which is a courageous goal, but is not nearly enough.

- Ember Penny (15), NC

## **Ohio - OH**

When people think about climate change, Ohio is not usually the first place they think of. They think of wildfires and rising sea levels, drastic changes that we have already witnessed, and yet, studies show that climate change will soon be drastically changing the ecosystem of my midwestern state. We are already facing increasingly hot summers which are deteriorating the air quality and worsening chances of asthma. It is predicted that by the end of the century summers in Ohio will feel like those of present day Arkansas. The expanding amount of heavy rain is also attributed to climate change. As the years proceed we'll see less snow and more rain, heightening chances of flooding, specifically in the Ohio River and Lake Erie. The water quality of the Lake will worsen due to the growth of Algal blooms which grow in hotter climate and harm the health of local fish species. In the next few decades, yield in some crops may increase from longer growing seasons and raising carbon dioxide levels but these benefits will be offset by the extremity of climate change. Long growing seasons will give insects more time to invest in our food. Crops and livestock will face severe heat. Changing rain patterns will harm plant growing seasons. The midwest is responsible for a \$76 billion agricultural sector. Losing our ability to farm would be detrimental to the entire country. The time to act on climate change is now. These are the effects of a government that has not sufficiently addressed it's nation's changing climate and they will only get worse if we do nothing. For my future, my state, and the future of generations after me I am asking you to recognize our constitutional right to a livable climate.

- Isabella Guinigundo (16), OH

## **Pennsylvania - PA**

“I am 17 years old, and a senior in high school in State College, Pennsylvania. I’m making big decisions right now - what university to attend, what field to study, and so on. My peers and I are also dealing with some things that other generations didn’t have to worry about, such as pleading with politicians to make decisions that give us the possibility of a liveable future on Earth. You know, teenage stuff.

It is the unfortunate truth of today that high schoolers are growing up fast. We have no choice - we see what is happening to our planet, to our future, and we have to fight. We all have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. When the government does not do its part to protect the planet, it is actively obstructing those rights.

Maybe some of us don’t think it’s urgent because we aren’t feeling the effects right now. If that is your case, like me, you have privilege. Marginalized communities, however, are already disproportionately feeling the effects of climate change. Native Americans have had their land taken, and now the little they have left to survive on is dying. Rural areas of the world are changing. Working class people cannot budget for housing that will withstand record-breaking, climate change-induced weather.

This year, there have been multiple climate disasters. New research shows that by 2040, climate change will be irreversible. I think about that a lot. In 2040 I’ll be 39 years old. Hopefully, I’ll have been through college and graduate school. Maybe I’ll have a family. I’ll be living out the “American Dream” that our ancestors fought for. That our government is supposed to be protecting for us. Will we be looking at the end of our Earth’s resources? Or will we have done something about it by then?”

- Abbie La Porta (17), PA

## Tennessee - TN

Climate Change is deeply affecting my state, and the people who reside here. There is no solution to the threatening effects of climate change except to change the system under which we function as a nation. In Nashville, due to changes in temperature and humidity, the length of the mosquito season has increased by eleven days since 1980. Longer mosquito seasons increase the risk of mosquito-borne diseases, such as Zika. In addition, during the summer in Memphis, days in which the temperature reaches above 95 degrees Fahrenheit have increased by 16.9 since 1970. For individuals who work outside, for children who play in summer camp, for pets who live in backyards, these numbers are life threatening. Chattanooga is the sixth fastest warming city in the US, warming on average 4.1 degrees Fahrenheit every 50 years. Warming at such a fast pace not only affects residents, but also affects the growing season of local farmers. In Tennessee, extreme weather patterns are becoming the norm. It is February and, just last Wednesday it snowed, and today, the following Tuesday, it is 75 degrees Fahrenheit. Now, it will be raining for the next week. Not just raining, but pouring. Tennessee has seen a 27% increase in the heaviest downpours since 1958, causing flooding — damaging and even annihilating personal property and costing lives. We know how to change these alarming trends. We know how to guarantee a habitable Earth for my children. Now we must take action.

- Bella Barocas (17), TN

## Texas - TX

“Being a student activist in Texas, I look at every issue that affects everyday people in this state; primarily gun violence, and climate change. These two issues are what I see drastically impacting my state as time goes on, and both will only get worse if we don’t enact common sense legislation to tackle them, or rather force congress to do so through the courts. Texas is on the list of southern states to be impacted the worst by climate change over the next 50-100 years in every aspect ( ecosystems, droughts, hurricanes, agriculture etc).

Last year, the city I've lived in for my 17 years was directly hit by Hurricane Harvey. Harvey was the worst storms our city has seen. My neighborhood was an island, but nearly all of my friends were evacuated, and some are still in the rebuilding process. Hurricane Harvey brought Houston's third "500 year storm" in three years. The winds continue to get stronger, and the flooding is only getting worse. That, in almost every opinion, is due to both infrastructure and the 51 inches of rain dumped on the city by this storm. School was cancelled for 2 weeks, finals were cancelled, and teachers were lighter with grading. This wasn't because we needed to cope with a hurricane hit-- there was simply no way for students to go to school and pretend life was normal knowing full-well they're homeless with killed pets, lost valuables, and no hope for a better tomorrow. Families were depressed, and began to panic when rain hit the city for months to come. The storms Texas - and cities along the coast specifically - sees are leaving behind severe mental health issues, as well as massive property destruction.

What I'm also afraid of is the increase in dangerous heat waves that will ultimately lead to even more heat-related deaths. In the next 25 years, experts are saying Dallas, Texas may see summer temperatures rise from an average of 86 degrees Fahrenheit to 94 degrees, with extremes rising above 120 (by scientists at the University of Texas at Arlington). Rising temperatures will lead to longer droughts which will change the agriculture and irrigation cycles here. Warmer oceans will bring us stronger storms, and more death."

- Marcel McClinton (17), TX

## Utah - UT

"When I was younger, I would wish not to have snow on Halloween so that I could go out in costume. Especially with the more recent years, I consider myself lucky if there is any snow at all for Christmas. This is an evident result of climate change. In regards to the case of Juliana v US, I have to find that I agree with those teens—I want my right to a livable climate.

"The government argues that this case should be shut down before even going to the courts because they say that the proper place for such action is at the voting box. That argument might of held true if it were used against a legal adult. However, the government responded in this way to minors. Those youth, like me, are not old enough to vote. We have voices, and our own unique opinions. Are we not allowed to let our voices be heard? Do we

not have a right to have a hand in deciding our futures simply because we are not old enough?

“Even in my short, 17 years, I have seen climate change affect my state. I have seen abnormal windstorms and we are getting less and less snowfall and overall moisture each year. Just on Black Friday, just a week ago, the government released a report on climate change proclaiming that the United States could potentially lose over 10% of its GDP. Climate change is real. It is happening. And as of right now, us youth have no say at all in stopping its progression.”

- Morgan Allen (17), UT

## **Vermont - VT**

A community culture that relies on access and support that lake Champlain provides will come crumbling down if climate issues aren't taken care of within the near future.

Unpredictable, traumatic, and intense weather patterns have affected the wellbeing of the community. In regards to recreation, education, and events. We have to build in excess water reserves to grow local produce, make snow at our ski resorts, and drill new wells for our families. All because the human race hasn't helped preserve mother earth for generations to come. I have never lived in a world that has a fully complete atmosphere. I see byproducts everyday within my daily life within my own community. The winter months are colder with varied amounts of precipitation, while summer is hot and dry. We need to slow the effects of climate change before it is to late.

Species are picking up new migration patterns due to climate change, and ticks have never been so abundant. While I am only one voice from a small state, I want to see a change in the current climate culture that will be sustainable for years to come. I know this is a tall order but I want to see my

future children and grandchildren grow up in a world that has a more stable climate.

- Meredith Gove (17), VT

## **Washington - WA**

As a 4th generation Seattleite, the iconic beauty of the Pacific Northwest has been the backdrop of my memories, and the generations that came before me. I'm still grappling with the idea that my summers on Lake Washington may look different due to climate change; in fact, they already have. For days this summer, the smoke from wildfires prevented anyone in the Seattle area to go outside for an extended period of time. Research shows that changes in climate, leading to hot and dry summers, has increased fire activity, leading to the smoky haze across the Seattle skyline. The air quality was as bad as smoking 7 cigarettes per day.

As a student living in Washington, I wish I spent more time paying attention to the salmon unit in middle school science. Memorizing the life cycle of a salmon, from an egg to a spawner, seemed like an irrelevant task. But what I failed to recognize is that this cycle is at the center of the Pacific Northwest's ecosystem. However, due to climate change, the salmon population is decreasing. And so are the nutrient streams salmon live in and the beloved population of Orcas and Native culture. These aspects are so ingrained in Washington society, yet many have failed to recognize their decline. I'm worried that salmon, and the species that depend on them, will go extinct in my lifetime.

As an advocate for the less fortunate, I know that climate change is not just affecting the environment around us. Climate change is harming the most vulnerable of our society: the homeless. And natural disasters, increasing by number and magnitude due to climate change, are exacerbating this issue. Seattle has around 12,000 people sleeping on the streets each night. This should not be normal.

And I do not want my generation and future generations to think these issues are normal.

- Annie Poole (16), WA

### **Wyoming - WY**

“My name is Ben Radosevich and I’m a 12th grader at Natrona County High School in Casper, Wyoming. I’m writing to express my growing concerns over climate change, and the lack of effort put into solving this problem. It’s extremely relevant now, with the United Nations’ frightening report on the urgency of this matter coming weeks earlier.

“These 1.5 and 2 degrees landmarks bring with them such devastating consequences, and they’re looking pretty inevitable with the way things are going at this moment. These rises of temperature will bring with them melting of enormous pieces of ice, rising sea levels, mass migration, severe drought, food shortages, and more abundant and extreme natural disasters.

“For Wyoming I imagine they won’t be as devastating; we won’t be forced from our homes like millions elsewhere will. From what I understand the consequences will be more in the realm of food shortages, warmer air, less winter and snow. These frighten me. It’s not a world I’m eager to live in... Right now this looks almost impossible, I’m sure, for our politicians. Everything looks impossible before it’s done. Stopping climate change, no matter how difficult it seems, is what our world has been tasked with and it’s what we need to do.”

- Ben Radosevich (17), WY

### **Washington, D.C.**

My name is Natasha Zimmermann, I am 16 years old, and I am from Washington, DC. I have lived in this city my entire life, and I have loved experiencing its unique culture. From the National Mall, to the museums and

memorials, to Nationals Park, and to the Potomac and Anacostia riverfronts, Washington, DC embodies a vibrant lifestyle. Tragically, climate change will destroy these intrinsic parts of Washington, DC's identity. I have spent many days walking the National Mall, attending Nationals games, visiting museums and monuments, and protesting at the White House; climate change will eliminate these opportunities. The Potomac and Anacostia Rivers will overflow due to rising water levels, and the water will cover expanses of the National Mall, Nationals Park, the tarmac at National Airport, parts of the Wharf and Anacostia Park, and potentially even iconoclastic memorials such as the World War II Memorial, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial. My visits to these places mark some of my happiest memories, but the future children of Washington, DC will not have these culturally rich experiences if climate change progresses. Climate change will also place Washington, DC in a high-risk water sustainability crisis. Even with the projected rise in river levels, increasing evaporation rates will cause a higher water demand when there are fewer resources to meet that need; Washingtonians will be at risk of experiencing drought. While these effects may seem far-off, climate change is already affecting Washingtonians. Land near Washington, DC is sinking, and both metro stations and neighborhoods are flooding. My crew team, which rows on the Potomac River, loses many practices because the river rises so high after rainfall that it moves too quickly to row upon safely and floods the docks and boathouse. The environment of Washington, DC is central to my identity, and it serves a similar role for countless other Washingtonians. Climate change threatens not only our city and culture, but also a piece of who we are.

- Natalie Zimmerman (16), D.C.