Over the past several months, North Carolinians have been grappling with the burden of a historical crisis. COVID-19 has presented unimaginable hardship for the people of this state, particularly those who are Black and Brown. This public health crisis, which is exacerbated by environmental pollutants that are placed in primarily Black and Brown communities, during an uprising against police brutality and the mutilation of Black bodies, has forced North Carolina to take a long look at their racist history.

If this didn't create enough of a hardship for our communities, NC Attorney General Josh Stein granted a waiver to Elizabeth City, NC, a predominantly Black community in our state, to begin disconnecting services to customers unable to keep up with their monthly bills. Services like water and electricity are essential to public health. Resuming disconnections will have deadly consequences for people when the summer heat is at its peak, and when residents' livelihood is dependent on access to these services in the midst of a pandemic. The latest North Carolina Heat report shows 158 emergency room visits due to heat-related illness the week of June 21-27 alone, with more than 500 heat-related ER visits across the state for the entire season.[1]

On Tuesday July 7th, Governor Roy Cooper went on record stating that he would not renew Executive Order 142, the State's utility moratorium, which will leave our communities in severe debt and without access to basic essentials in order to protect their families during a public health crisis and what is likely to be the largest economic recession in North Carolina's history.

We, the North Carolina Black and Brown Policy Network, are demanding that Governor Roy Cooper extend the moratorium for utility shutoffs in the state of North Carolina and utilize available funding to provide immediate utility debt relief for all NC customers.

North Carolina has received more than enough funding from the federal government to alleviate the burden of back payment for utility customers. It is irresponsible for our state leaders to expect North Carolinians, especially Black and Brown community members, to be able to live everyday and afford their essentials while facing higher rates of unemployment, higher risk of viral infection, and receiving substantially less funding than affluent communities.

The lack of leadership and inaction of the General Assembly has put working families on the back burner, while approximately $300 million dollars of federal aid funding has been allocated to balance the Department of Transportation's budget, leaving those in need without any resolution. The blatant refusal to prioritize the health and wellbeing of the over 1 million families vulnerable to water or electricity shutoffs creates an added layer of crisis we've never witnessed. A disconnection crisis as summer temperatures peak will have a death toll.

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[1] NCDHHS, *Heat Report June 21-27* (2020), https://publichealth.nc.gov/chronicdiseaseandinjury/doc/Heatreport-June-21-27-2020.pdf

The North Carolina Black and Brown Policy Network stands in solidarity with our communities and resists the lack of concern or protection for Black, Brown, and low-income communities of this state.

Governor Cooper must put his constituents first and extend the moratorium on utility shutoffs, and provide debt relief for the safety and wellbeing of our people.

The undersigned,

North Carolina Black and Brown Policy Network Author Organizations:

Action NC
Advance Carolina
Appalachian Voices
Center for Biological Diversity
Democracy Green
Democracy NC
Education Justice Alliance
El Pueblo
Fayetteville PACT
Forward Justice
GreenLeaf Canvassing
The Sankofatree

Endorsing Organizations:

Alliance for Climate Education
Down East Coal Ash Environmental and Social Justice Coalition
Dogwood Alliance
Energy Justice North Carolina
Mountain True
NC Climate Justice Collective
North Carolina Council of Churches
North Carolina Interfaith Power and Light
NC, Poor People's Campaign, Ecological Devastation Committee
NCWARN
Sunrise Asheville
Sunrise NC
350 Triangle

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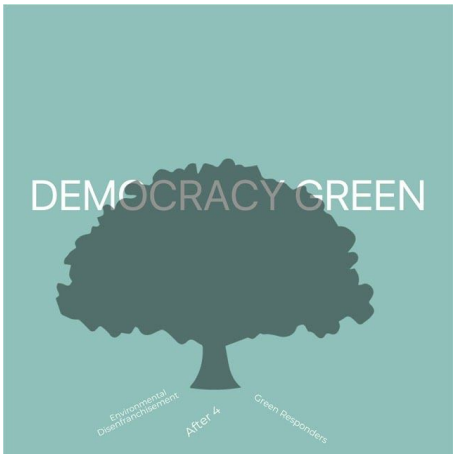
AC


DEMOCRACY GREEN
Environmental Disenfranchisement
After 4
Green Responders

P.A.C.T.
FAYETTEVILLE
Police Accountability
Community Task Force

ActionNC
Organizing the fight for justice and equality

FORWARD JUSTICE

DEMOCRACY NC

Education Justice Alliance

EJA

EL PUEBLO

CENTER for BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Because life is good.

Appalachian Voices

North Carolina Council of Churches

ACE
ALLIANCE FOR
CLIMATE EDUCATION

SUNRISE MOVEMENT

NC
CLIMATE JUSTICE
COLLECTIVE

350
Triangle

DOGWOOD
ALLIANCE

NORTH CAROLINA
Poor People's Campaign
A NATIONAL CALL for MORAL REVIVAL

NC WARN

ENERGY
NC
JUSTICE
END THE DUKE MONOPOLY

NCIPL
North Carolina
Interfaith Power & Light

mountaintrue.
Protecting the Places We Share.