Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

September 14, 2023

The Honorable Deb Haaland
Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Liz Klein
Bureau of Ocean Energy Management
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Secretary Haaland and Director Klein:

We write to thank the Biden Administration for its leadership in fighting the climate crisis and urge you to finalize the Proposed Program for the 2023-2028 National Outer Continental Shelf Oil and Gas Leasing Program (National OCS Program) without any new lease sales. Doing so will be a boon for our economic vitality, environmental health, and national security.

As Members with an interest in protecting communities along the Atlantic, Pacific, and Eastern Gulf of Mexico, we strongly encourage you to proceed with your Proposed Program and not introduce new leases in these areas. However, our interest in protecting all our coasts stems from the simple truth that the climate crisis is both a national and global imperative—a crisis that cannot be overcome if we continue to develop fossil fuels in some waters while protecting others.

We expect public officials aligned with Big Oil to continue pushing for more drilling leases in the National OCS Program, but any new leases would have the potential effect of endangering the health and livelihoods of our constituents; the success of our tourism, fishing, and recreational economies; and the marine life that call these coastlines home.

Offshore oil and gas energy development is dangerous. It requires seismic testing at high levels proven by science to harm marine life. The spills it generates, all too common in areas where leasing already occurs, know no boundaries and cause irreversible damage to ocean ecosystems. We are already working closely with the Biden Administration to protect endangered species, such as the North Atlantic Right Whale in the Atlantic and the Rice's whale in the Gulf, from known threats stemming from fossil fuel production and other activities.

The risks of oil and gas development are compounded when you take into consideration the economic and national security risks of climate change. Our communities are already grappling with sea level rise, extreme storms, heat waves, and wildfires that are caused or worsened by greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuels. Meanwhile, the United States is already the largest oil and gas producer in the world with Big Oil raking in billions of dollars in record profits. New, unnecessary lease sales in the 2023-2028 Program will lock in decades more of pollution from an industry that already holds more than 2,000 offshore leases, including 8 million unused acres.

Any immediate domestic or international energy security concerns that may require increases in the supply of oil and gas within the U.S. market or to be exported to our allies abroad will not be fixed by introducing new leases, which require years to develop. For these reasons, we also urge you not to introduce new leases in the final program. We believe that if the Biden Administration

works closely with Congress, we can soon sever the tie that requires offshore oil and gas lease sales be held in order for offshore wind lease sales to proceed. Offshore wind development is a critical component of our efforts to secure our nation's long-term energy independence and keep our coastal communities safe from climate change.

We cannot drill our way to a safe climate, healthy environment, and thriving economy. We greatly appreciate the leadership of President Biden and your department in protecting future of the American people. Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Frank Pallone, Jr.
Member of Congress

Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress
Ranking Member, Committee on Natural Resources

Jared Huffman
Member of Congress

Salud Carbajal
Member of Congress

Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress

Kathy Castor
Member of Congress

Mike Levin
Member of Congress