

November 21, 2018

By Email

The Honorable Muriel E. Bowser
Mayor of the District of Columbia
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., 3rd Floor
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Mayor Bowser:

As business and community leaders passionate about the District's energy future, we write to express profound concern about your nominees to the DC Public Service Commission.

Over the past four years, we have applauded your Administration's ambitious energy-related commitments. From the pledge to achieve 100% decarbonation by 2050 to the benchmarks formalized in the Clean Energy DC Plan, the District's commitments align with other global leaders that recognize the urgent need to address climate change.

The current status quo, however, will not achieve this vision. The District must reconfigure its energy landscape — moving towards clean, distributed, and resilient energy infrastructure — with aggressive action across the public, private, and utility sectors. With oversight over the District's electric and natural gas sectors, the Public Service Commission and its three Commissioners will play a vital role in shaping our city's future grid.

Against this backdrop, the nominations of Willie Phillips as Chair and Greer Gillis as Commissioner are disappointing. After a process during which the Mayor's Office of Talent and Appointments interviewed several worthy and knowledgeable candidates, the resulting nominees are neither.

There is no escaping the obvious about Ms. Gillis: she has no background in energy. Her experience as an engineer, in matters mostly related to transportation, has no relevance to the range of issues faced by the Commission. There is nothing in her background that suggests experience or interest in this area.

It is helpful to put this in another context. Greer Gillis has no experience in education; would the city ever consider a nomination for her to be DCPS Chancellor or Deputy Chancellor? She has no experience in policing and public safety; would she ever be considered for a top job at MPD? The answer to both of these questions is, of course, no. We do not understand why it should be any different when it comes to issues of energy and climate.

With respect to Chair, the criteria should be plain: a distinguished record of experience in utility issues (even if not necessarily as a regulator), and a demonstrated ability to manage and lead. Mr. Phillips does not fit this description. While many of us have gotten to like Mr. Phillips personally during his four years on the Commission, his record gives no indication that he is prepared to serve as Chair. Mr. Phillips has not demonstrated a strong interest in the issues, nor evidence of leadership. He has not earned an appointment to Chair.

We strongly urge you to pull these nominations. We are confident that capable, visionary leaders can be found for these positions — and help the District meet its energy and climate goals.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mark Rodeffer, Chair
Lara Levison, Energy Committee Chair
DC Sierra Club

Anya Schoolman
Executive Director
DC Solar United Neighbors (DC SUN)

Robert Robinson
Chair
DC Consumer Utility Board

Sam Brooks
Chair
Coalition for a Resilient DC

Larry Martin
Convener
GRID2.0 Working Group

Marchant Wentworth
Principal
Wentworth Green Strategies

Michael Bochynski
Chesapeake Program Coordinator
Clean Water Action

Nikhil Balakumar
Executive Director
Coalition for a Resilient DC

Parisa B. Norouzi
Executive Director
Empower DC

Chris Weiss
Executive Director
DC Environmental Network

Camila Thorndike
DC Campaign Chair
Chesapeake Climate Action Network (CCAN) Action Fund

Justin McCarthy
Communications Director
DC Statehood Green Party

Michael McDonald
Coordinator
National Capital Region Resilience System Initiative

Ashik Siddique
Co-Chair
Metro DCA Ecosocialists

cc: Phil Mendelson, DC Council Chairman
Anita Bonds, Councilmember
David Grosso, Councilmember
Elissa Silverman, Councilmember
Robert White, Jr., Councilmember
Brienne K. Nadeau, Councilmember
Jack Evans, Councilmember
Mary M. Cheh, Councilmember
Brandon T. Todd, Councilmember
Kenyan McDuffie, Councilmember
Charles Allen, Councilmember
Vincent C. Gray, Councilmember
Trayon White, Sr., Councilmember