

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine  
Re: Committee on the Potential Impacts of Gold Mining in Virginia

July 7, 2022

Dear Chair Hopkins and NASEM Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments to aid your examination of potential impacts on the health, safety, and welfare of Virginians from gold mining. Evaluating these impacts and, ultimately, whether existing permitting requirements and air and water quality regulations are adequate to protect Virginia is an important component of the public policy discussion regarding the mining for gold and other metals here in the Commonwealth.

The undersigned organizations are extremely concerned about the probable negative impacts on public health, the environment, and local and state economies from gold mining, especially given the extensive gaps in Virginia's regulatory framework. We write to express our support for, and agreement with, the comments of Southern Environmental Law Center and Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and the report of Dr. Ann Maest. We appreciate the time and effort they committed to researching and preparing those submissions as well as your attention to the very serious and important issues raised by them.

Additionally, given Dr. Ann Maest's decades of experience, we support her nomination as a peer reviewer for your Committee's report. She is an international expert in the environmental effects of hardrock mining, has previously served as a member of various NASEM committees, and is eminently qualified to fulfill the responsibilities of a peer reviewer. We hope you select her.

Your study of the potential impacts of gold mining is not a theoretical exercise. The introduction of industrial gold mining in Virginia would have severe and lasting impacts on our communities, our families, and our landscape. We would feel the impacts personally and in our daily lives – gold mining would impact our private drinking water wells, our recreational streams, our public drinking water sources, our air, our health, our roads, our safety, our quality of life, our wallets, and more. We encourage the Committee to center these community impacts in its findings and recommendations. Your report must detail the full extent of these impacts in order to demonstrate to the Commonwealth the need to consider its upcoming gold mining policy decisions very seriously.

Thank you for your Committee's work, and we look forward to your thorough report in the fall.

Sincerely,

*Jessica Sims, Virginia Field Coordinator, Appalachian Voices*

*Andrew Payton, Vice Chair, Climate Action Alliance of the Valley*

*Tiffany Haworth, Executive Director, Dan River Basin Association*

*Chad Oba, President, Friends of Buckingham*

*Pamela Goddard, Mid-Atlantic Sr. Regional Program Director, National Parks Conservation Association*

*Christopher G. Miller, President, Piedmont Environmental Council*

*Phillip Musegaas, Vice President - Programs and Litigation, Potomac Riverkeeper Network*

*Stephanie Rinaldi, Coordinator, Press Pause Coalition*

*Hope F. Cupit, CEO, SERCAP, INC.*

*Heidi Dhivya Berthoud, President, Virginia Community Rights Network*

*Narissa Turner, Climate & Clean Energy Policy Manager, Virginia Conservation Network*

*Robin Broder, Deputy Director, Waterkeepers Chesapeake*