

MARIA CANTWELL, WASHINGTON, CHAIR
TED CRUZ, TEXAS, RANKING MEMBER

AMY KLOBUCHAR, MINNESOTA
BRIAN SCHATZ, HAWAII
EDWARD J. MARKEY, MASSACHUSETTS
GARY C. PETERS, MICHIGAN
TAMMY BALDWIN, WISCONSIN
TAMMY DUCKWORTH, ILLINOIS
JON TESTER, MONTANA
KYRSTEN SINEMA, ARIZONA
JACKY ROSEN, NEVADA
BEN RAY LUJAN, NEW MEXICO
JOHN W. HICKENLOOPER, COLORADO
RAPHAEL G. WARNOCK, GEORGIA
PETER WELCH, VERMONT

JOHN THUNE, SOUTH DAKOTA
ROGER F. WICKER, MISSISSIPPI
DEB FISCHER, NEBRASKA
JERRY MORAN, KANSAS
DAN SULLIVAN, ALASKA
MARSHA BLACKBURN, TENNESSEE
TODD YOUNG, INDIANA
TED BUDD, NORTH CAROLINA
ERIC SCHMITT, MISSOURI
J.D. VANCE, OHIO
SHELLEY MOORE CAPITO, WEST VIRGINIA
CYNTHIA M. LUMMIS, WYOMING

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
AND TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125

WEBSITE: <https://commerce.senate.gov>

LILA HARPER HELMS, MAJORITY STAFF DIRECTOR
BRAD GRANTZ, REPUBLICAN STAFF DIRECTOR

August 22, 2024

The Honorable Bill Nelson
Administrator
National Aeronautics and Space Administration
300 E Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear Mr. Nelson:

The Biden-Harris administration marked Earth Day this year by touting its efforts to combat “the climate crisis,” including its quixotic quest for net-zero emissions, the formation of a multi-billion-dollar American Climate Corps, and the restriction of federal oil and gas leases.¹ Young people are absorbing the rhetoric; they report high levels of anxiety about climate change and are adapting their behavior in radical ways, including by foregoing children. Is this anxiety based on science or sensationalism? The evidence points to the latter. Rather than presenting scientific evidence neutrally, agencies like the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) are producing faux-educational materials that fuel climate alarmism to manufacture support for the administration’s goals. In the midst of what the Biden-Harris administration has called a “youth mental health crisis,”² NASA’s hyperventilating campaign of youth indoctrination is irresponsible. It is time to correct course.

The last few years have seen a dramatic increase in what the American Psychological Association dubs “eco-anxiety,” *i.e.*, a “chronic fear of environmental doom.”³ NASA’s chief scientist is quite worried,⁴ and so too is Generation Z.⁵ In 2020, just under half of young adults

¹ *President Biden Marks Earth Day 2024 with Historic Climate Action*, WHITE HOUSE (April 22, 2024), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/04/22/fact-sheet-president-biden-marks-earth-day-2024-with-historic-climate-action/>.

² *Biden-Harris Administration Takes Action to Advance Kids’ Online Health, Safety, and Privacy*, WHITE HOUSE (July 22, 2024), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/ostp/news-updates/2024/07/22/biden-harris-administration-takes-actions-to-advance-kids-online-health-safety-and-privacy/>.

³ SUSAN CLAYTON ET AL., AM. PSYCH. ASS., MENTAL HEALTH & OUR CHANGING CLIMATE: IMPACTS, IMPLICATIONS & GUIDANCE 68 (Mar. 2017), <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2017/03/mental-health-climate.pdf>.

⁴ Sarah Sloat, *How NASA’s Chief Scientist Manages Climate Anxiety*, THE CUT (Apr. 8, 2024), <https://www.thecut.com/article/how-nasa-chief-scientist-kate-calvin-gets-it-done.html>.

⁵ CLAYTON, *supra* note 3, at 36 (“Children, with less ability to articulate their feelings in language, are also more likely to regress, showing babyish behaviors, or somatize, developing stomachaches or other physical symptoms to

(ages 18–34) said “the stress they feel about climate change affects their daily lives.”⁶ Today, 85 percent of Gen Z is “very” or “somewhat” concerned about global warming,⁷ often citing the “failure of governments to take action.”⁸ They are accordingly taking action—or inaction—of their own. In 2021, just under 40 percent of those between the ages of 16 and 25 said they were “hesitant to have children” due to climate change,⁹ contributing to a declining birth rate.¹⁰

It is natural to feel some stress about important issues, but when it comes to climate change, a level-headed approach grounded in scientific inquiry—not in fearful adherence to “the science”—is needed. The government has a responsibility to present scientific evidence neutrally—to inform, rather than persuade. When it instead incites panic by selectively presenting propaganda that masquerades as scientific data, eco-anxiety follows.¹¹ And when it offers ready-made programs to channel anxiety into radical environmentalist activism, it looks like that was the goal all along.¹²

NASA is fueling youth climate anxiety by pushing alarmism under the guise of science. For instance, NASA’s Climate Kids website features a graphic depicting portions of the country—including the cities of New Orleans and Miami—that will sink under water if the glacial ice

express upset, as did one child when his school cafeteria refused to recycle.”); *See also* ANTHONY LEISEROWITZ ET AL., CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE AMERICAN MIND: BELIEFS & ATTITUDES, FALL 2023, YALE PROGRAM ON CLIMATE CHANGE COMM’N & GEORGE MASON UNIV. CTR. FOR CLIMATE CHANGE COMM’N (Jan. 11, 2024), <https://climatecommunication.yale.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/climate-change-american-mind-beliefs-attitudes-fall-2023.pdf>; BRUCE BEKKAR ET AL., MENTAL HEALTH AND OUR CHANGING CLIMATE: CHILDREN AND YOUTH REPORT 2023, AM. PSYCH. ASS. 14 (2023), <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2023/10/mental-health-youth-report-2023.pdf>.

⁶ *Majority of US Adults Believe Climate Change Is Most Important Issue Today*, AM. PSYCH. ASS. (Feb. 6, 2020), <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2020/02/climate-change>.

⁷ *Big Generational Differences on Legal Weed, Climate Change, and Health Care*, MARIST POLL (Jan. 30, 2024), <https://maristpoll.marist.edu/polls/big-generational-differences-on-legal-weed-climate-change-and-health-care/>.

⁸ Caroline Hickman et al., *Climate Anxiety in Children and Young People and Their Beliefs About Government Responses to Climate Change: A Global Survey*, LANCET PLANET HEALTH (Dec. 5, 2021), <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34895496/>.

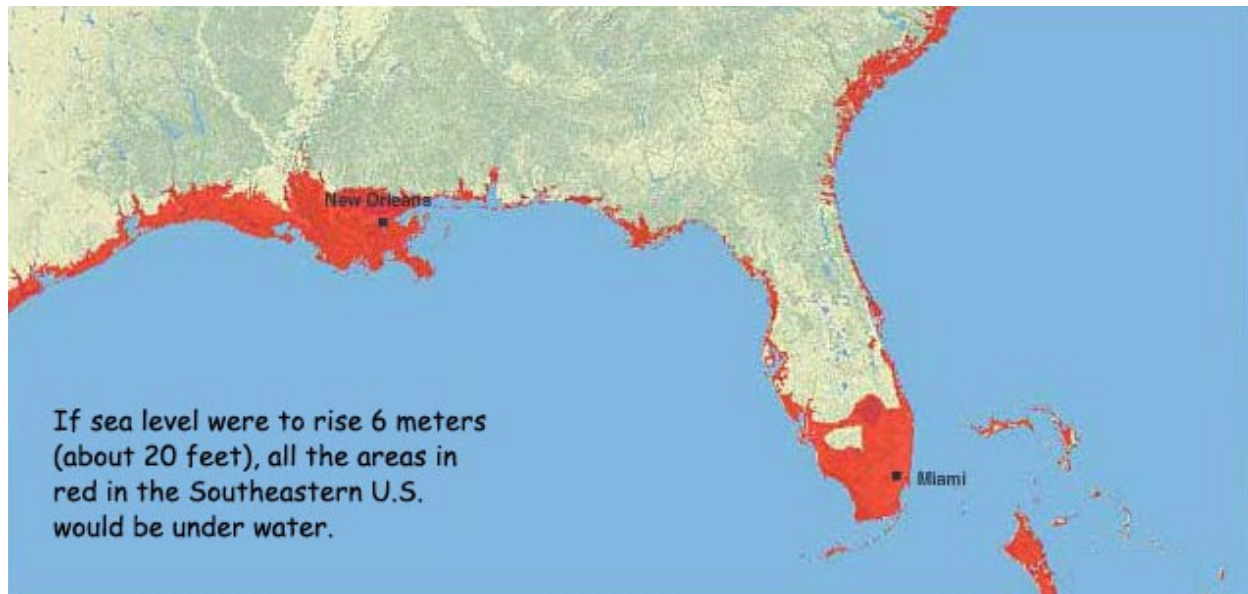
⁹ *Id.*; *see also* Navin Singh Khadka, *Climate Anxiety: ‘I Don’t Want to Burden the World with My Child’*, BRITISH BROADCASTING CORP. (Jan. 15, 2024), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-67298903>; Peggy O’Donnell Heffington, *Don’t Want a Baby Because of Climate Fears? You’re Not Alone*, WASH. POST (Apr. 19, 2023), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2023/04/19/climate-change-reproductive-choice-kids-childlessness/>.

¹⁰ Greg Ip & Janet Adamy, *Suddenly There Aren’t Enough Babies. The Whole World Is Alarmed.*, WALL ST. J. (May 13, 2024), <https://www.wsj.com/world/birthrates-global-decline-cause-ddaf8be2>.

¹¹ Arnaud Chiolero, *Academic Framing as a Cause of Eco-Anxiety*, EPIDEMIOLOGIA (Jan. 26, 2023) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9944577/>.

¹² *See* Emmanuel Maduneme, *Some Slice of Climate Anxiety . . . Is Good: A Cross-Sectional Survey Exploring the Relationship Between College Students Media Exposure and Perceptions About Climate Change*, 29 J. OF HEALTH COMM. 45, 49 (2024), <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epdf/10.1080/10810730.2024.2354370> (citing the view that “climate change anxiety should not be pathologized because some levels might be beneficial for climate change action”); Tobias Brosch, *Affect and Emotions as Drivers of Climate Change Perception and Action: A Review*, 42 CURRENT OP. IN BEHAV. SCIS. 15–21 (2021), <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2352154621000206?via%3Dihub>.

covering Greenland melts.¹³ The imagery is reminiscent of former vice president Al Gore’s prophecy that Manhattan would soon be underwater from melting polar ice. NASA conveniently fails to inform children that even at today’s estimated rate of sea-level rise, such a scenario would not occur for hundreds of years (if ever).¹⁴



NASA similarly invites kids visiting its website to explore a “Climate Time Machine” for sea level—*which omits dates*—to “[s]ee into the past and ahead to the future” and ask “[w]hat parts of the world will be under water as sea level rises, inch by inch, foot by foot?”¹⁵ After that, they can watch an episode of “Climate Tales,” featuring a polar bear whose habitat has been destroyed by human-caused global warming.¹⁶ “Global warming will be the *biggest problem of*

¹³ *Planet Health Report: Sea Level*, NASA CLIMATE KIDS, <https://climatekids.nasa.gov/health-report-sea-level/> (last visited Aug. 22, 2024).

¹⁴ NASA elsewhere notes the current, elevated rate of 0.17 inches/year (0.4318 centimeters/year). See Jane J. Lee, *NASA Analysis Sees Spike in 2023 Global Sea Level Due to El Niño*, NASA (Mar. 27, 2024), <https://sealevel.nasa.gov/news/270/nasa-analysis-sees-spike-in-2023-global-sea-level-due-to-el-nino/>. At a rate of .44 centimeters/year, it would take more than 1,363 years for the sea level to rise 6 meters. Even assuming we see accelerated growth, it’s safe to say the sea will not rise 6 meters within the lifetime of anyone living today. See Figure 9.25 in INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE, *CLIMATE CHANGE 2021: THE PHYSICAL SCIENCE BASIS*, 1296 (2021), <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/figures/chapter-9/figure-9-25>.

¹⁵ *The Climate Time Machine: Sea Level*, NASA CLIMATE KIDS, <https://climatekids.nasa.gov/time-machine/> (choose “Sea Level” from dropdown) (last visited Aug. 22, 2024).

¹⁶ *Climate Tales: Adventures on a Changing Planet*, NASA CLIMATE KIDS, <https://climatekids.nasa.gov/climate-tales/> (last visited Aug. 22, 2024); See also *Winners and Losers in the Arctic*, NASA CLIMATE KIDS, <https://climatekids.nasa.gov/arctic-animals/> (last visited Aug. 22, 2024) (“Condolences to the polar bears...”); cf. Bjorn Lomborg, *Polar Bears, Dead Coral and Other Climate Fictions*, WALL ST. J. (July 31, 2024), <https://www.wsj.com/articles/polar-bears-dead-coral-and-other-climate-fictions-528b18ea> (“After years of misrepresentation, it finally became impossible to ignore the mountain of evidence showing that the global polar-bear population has increased substantially.”).

all,” NASA separately reiterates, but there is “still time” to “turn away from fossil fuels.”¹⁷ Youth can “help the planet” by taking action “to help slow down climate change.”¹⁸ “Maybe we should all think about down-sizing to a tiny house,”¹⁹ the agency says, or recognize that “you don’t really need a lawn at all.”²⁰

Right on cue, the Biden-Harris administration is now providing an outlet for the climate anxiety it has stoked: it launched the American Climate Corps (ACC) in September to “mobilize more than 20,000 Americans in the clean energy and climate resilience sectors.”²¹ President Biden recently pledged to expand the ACC to triple the number of taxpayer-funded political activists working “at the forefront of our clean energy future.”²² He has sought \$8 billion in new funding to hire over 50,000 for the ACC within the next decade.²³ This comes amid reports that the Inflation Reduction Act’s environmental spending, which supports the ACC, has already “delivered a massive windfall to a small group of Democratic donors.”²⁴

The impetus behind the ACC is clear.²⁵ It is “an opportunity to turn anxiety into action,” explains AmeriCorps CEO Michael D. Smith.²⁶ “We’ve heard a lot from young Americans about climate anxiety. It’s been heartbreaking to hear young people say, ‘This is overwhelming. I don’t know what to do, I don’t know if I want to bring children into this world.’”²⁷ ACC “gives you a way to not wait for somebody else to do something.”²⁸

Our country’s approach to climate change should be driven by science, not the woke zeitgeist. So that the American public and I may better understand NASA’s approach to climate education and climate anxiety, please provide the documents requested below and written responses to the

¹⁷ *The Story of Fossil Fuels, Part 4: Next*, NASA CLIMATE KIDS, <https://climatekids.nasa.gov/fossil-fuels-next/> (last visited Aug. 22, 2024).

¹⁸ *What Can We Do to Slow Down Climate Change?*, NASA CLIMATE KIDS, <https://climatekids.nasa.gov/how-to-help/> (last visited Aug. 22, 2024).

¹⁹ *Tiny House Fun*, NASA CLIMATE KIDS, <https://climatekids.nasa.gov/tiny-houses/> (last visited Aug. 22, 2024).

²⁰ *Water-wise Landscaper*, NASA CLIMATE KIDS, <https://climatekids.nasa.gov/career-landscaper/> (last visited Aug. 22, 2024).

²¹ Megan Lebowitz & Caroline Kenny, *White House Launches American Climate Corps*, NBC NEWS (Sept. 20, 2023), <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/white-house/white-house-launches-american-climate-corps-rcna105931>.

²² Presidential Statement, *State of the Union Address*, SPEECHES AND REMARKS (Mar. 7, 2024), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2024/03/07/remarks-of-president-joe-biden-state-of-the-union-address-as-prepared-for-delivery-2/>.

²³ Ari Natter, *Biden Seeks \$8 Billion to Expand American Climate Corps*, BLOOMBERG (Mar. 11, 2024), <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2024-03-11/biden-seeks-8-billion-to-expand-american-climate-corps>.

²⁴ Brian Slodysko, *A Signature Biden Law Aimed to Boost Renewable Energy. It Also Helped a Solar Company Reap Billions*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (June 26, 2024), <https://apnews.com/article/biden-solar-inflation-reduction-act-dca914675cd0855004214d82aab5b10c>.

²⁵ See Kate Yoder, *The American Climate Corps Will Get People into Green Jobs. Can It Help Their Mental Health Too?*, GRIST (May 16, 2024), <https://grist.org/health/american-climate-corps-mental-health-anxiety-action/>.

²⁶ Gerard Edic, *American Climate Corps to Focus on Next-Generation Workers*, AMERICAN PROSPECT (Apr. 22, 2024), <https://prospect.org/environment/2024-04-22-american-climate-corps-next-generation-workers/>.

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ *Id.*

questions below no later than September 5, 2024, and in accordance with the attached instructions:

1. Provide all documents and communications—including any feedback received—referring or relating to either (1) “Planet Health Report: Sea Level” on NASA’s Climate Kids website,²⁹ (2) “The Climate Time Machine: Sea Level” on the Climate Kids website,³⁰ or (3) the impact of the information presented on the Climate Kids website on the anxiety levels of its target audience.
2. How did NASA decide to include specific climate change scenarios, such as “Planet Health Report: Sea Level,” on the Climate Kids website? How do the depicted scenarios align with the agency’s commitment to scientific integrity?
3. A few webpages on the Climate Kids website include a disclaimer in small font that says the page “may contain broken links or outdated information” but that the “material is being kept online for historical purposes.”³¹ What are the “historical purposes” to which this disclaimer refers and why do they outweigh the presentation of up-to-date scientific information? Do archiving requirements limit NASA’s ability to update its website?
4. What measures does NASA take to ensure information presented on the Climate Kids website is up-to-date and not misinterpreted by young audiences?
5. Provide all documents and communications referring or relating to NASA grants to or for the Climate Literacy and Energy Awareness Network, including 80NSSC19K1696 for a “NASA elementary educational resources collection in CLEAN.”³²

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Ted Cruz
Ranking Member

²⁹ *Planet Health Report: Sea Level*, *supra* note 13.

³⁰ *The Climate Time Machine: Sea Level*, *supra* note 15.

³¹ See e.g., *Climate Tales: Adventures on a Changing Planet*, *supra* note 16.

³² *Project Grant 80NSSC19K1696*, USASPENDING.GOV, https://www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_80NSSC19K1696_8000 (last visited Aug. 22, 2024).