



NAACP

Derrick Johnson
*President and
Chief Executive Officer*

Leon W. Russell
*Chairman
National Board of Directors*

September 23, 2022

The Honorable Governor Tate Reeves
550 High Street
Sillers Building, 19th Floor
Jackson, MS 39201

BY EMAIL

Dear Governor Reeves:

I write with great urgency to request the City of Jackson be prioritized in the state's Intended Use Plan ("IUP") for infrastructure funding. As you know, Jackson has faced insurmountable obstacles to receive federal funding, and the policies created by your Administration have only exacerbated these issues. The Biden Administration has urged prioritization of historically disadvantaged communities in the allocation and distribution of federal investments, as outlined in its Justice 40 Initiative. Mississippi's current IUP will ensure the opposite result.

The current IUP caps loan forgiveness at \$500,000, an amount too low for the billions of dollars it will cost to fix Jackson's water issues. The state has the opportunity to prioritize places like Jackson, as the Executive Branch and EPA have urged. But everything we have observed to date points to the state refusing to do so. Indeed, in earlier drafts, Jackson was completely blocked from funding meant for its residents and other historically disadvantaged communities. The revised plan does not provide urgent resources needed for Jackson to rebuild.

Funding caps in the midst of a crisis will continue Mississippi's history of inequitable treatment, leaving a large and substantially Black community even further behind. We are deeply concerned by the state's consistent efforts to hobble one of the largest Black cities in America. This is the state capital, and your Administration continues to fumble opportunities to help Jackson residents.

History reflects Black Mississippians are resilient and committed to progress and self-determination, often in the face of actions intended to erode Black agency. Echoing this past, the state has resisted efforts to improve a fundamental resource—water—in its majority-Black and Black-led state capital. As a longtime resident of Jackson, and the president of the NAACP, I speak on behalf of the community in urging this imperative—Jackson must continue to control decisions related to water in its city.

You have an opportunity to demonstrate your commitment to the residents of Jackson. Your Administration has the authority to revise the plan ensuring maximum resources are available to Jackson.

We request you send a new IUP with increased funding to enable Jackson to actually benefit from federal investments. We ask the EPA, as aligned with legislative intent, to reject the state's current Intended Use Plan until the funding formula is revised.

Sincerely,



Derrick Johnson
President and CEO

CC:

The Honorable Lieutenant Governor Delbert Hosemann

Mr. Daniel Blackman
Regional Administrator
U.S. EPA Region 4

Mr. Kyle Brant
Environmental Justice Specialist
U.S. EPA Region 4

Mr. Chris Wells
Executive Director
Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality

Daniel Edney, MD, FACP, FASAM, State Health Officer
Christy Sones Barnett, MD, Regional Health Officer
Mississippi State Department of Health

Mr. Kenny Wayne Jones
Hinds County Administrator
Hinds County Delegation