

TO; Metro Council Members 11/7/19 FROM: Teena Halbig, 6505 Echo Trail, 40299, 267-6883
Since October 24, 1945, the United Nations system has protected & progressed our world. It is the largest global body where nations come together and create **better ways** to solve problems, better **ways** to share our planet, and **better ways** to build the future. Now more than ever, we need these **better ways** as we face what the UN Secretary-General has called the defining issue of our time: **Climate change**.

We also need **better ways** here at home in Jefferson County.

There is so much to say about climate change, and what it means for every person and living thing that calls earth home. The facts may be hard to hear, but we *can* change the course of our future — the situation is urgent, the predictions are daunting, but it's not too late.

For decades we've been warned about climate change by scientists, but it hasn't been easy for them to make us care. Until recently, intricate numbers and dramatic projections seemed hypothetical and far away. It was hard to see the forest through the trees.

But now, the warning signs are loud and clear: Those shaky, seemingly impossible projections that scientists made 20 years ago have come true. Our planet is showing dangerous symptoms from the effects of rising temperatures— symptoms that are already catastrophic for millions of species on earth, including our own. We can no longer call it climate **change**. It's climate **crisis**.

Last October, the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change or IPCC, a group of leading climate scientists completed a check-up on the climate crisis, and gave our planet a deeply troubling diagnosis:

To put it simply, the earth is running a fever that we've caused, and if its average temperature rises by 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels —which is 2.7 degrees Fahrenheit—we cross a dangerous threshold. It may sound like a small number, but it has huge implications. Millions more people will be exposed to life-threatening heat waves, flooding, and water shortages. As certain environments become uninhabitable and weather-related disasters strike, people will be forced to leave their homes, and the number of climate refugees around the world will increase significantly. Not to mention, entire ecosystems are already collapsing. It's clear that our earth is *not* in good health. And at 1.5 degrees warmer, it would be evidently worse, causing **imminent threats to our lives and our livelihoods**.

The impacts of rising temperatures aren't reserved for future generations to deal with — they're happening to us now, right in front of our eyes, in every region of our country.

Without question, climate change will affect *everyone*. But it will not affect everyone *equally*. Here in the U.S., low income communities and minority groups will be disproportionately impacted. Populations with increased health risks will become even more vulnerable. Communities that depend on agriculture are already facing economic distress. Underserved communities suffer the most from the climate crisis.

As part of its check-up, the IPCC prescribed a framework for us to protect our future: **We must reduce our planet's carbon output**, with the help of every nation, which includes the U.S., Kentucky and Jefferson County, to stabilize the rising global temperature. Since we know what we need to do, why are we still failing to solve the climate crisis? It's been one year since we received that prognosis, and we're still heading right toward that 1.5 degree increase.

The world is looking at us: **The United States emits more CO2 than any other country besides China**, and we're not reducing our footprint fast enough to pull our weight in the global fight. We're running out of time to turn things around; therefore, it is time to say enough is enough.

We need drastic change from our government, and we need it now.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told us in NY in the UN General Assembly at our UNA-USA Global Engagement Summit in February, when he personally called on 1900 of UNA-USA advocates, including about 20 of us from Louisville, to help sound the alarm on climate change and highlight the solutions that give us hope.

We are already champions for the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, or as many call them, the "SDGs" or "Global Goals". But we know that *none* of the goals are within reach unless we deal with the climate crisis. Until we make progress on "**SDG 13, Climate Action**," goals like ending hunger, eradicating poverty, and improving global health hang in the balance.

One of our 200 chapters, UNA-Northern Virginia Community College Chapter sparked a movement on campus for individual action, hosting a series of **up cycling activities to repurpose plastic and other waste that emits potent greenhouse gases as it degrades**. Youths here in Louisville and others are **demanding change from our governments and industries because it is quite literally a means for survival**. Greta Thunberg, Alexandria Villaseñor is **fighting for the right to have a future**. **At the UN Climate Action Summit last month, Greta delivered a profound, angry, and chilling speech to world leaders through tears. "You have stolen my dreams and my childhood with your empty words," she said. "And yet, I'm one of the lucky ones. People are suffering. People are dying. Entire ecosystems are collapsing."**