Dear Chairman Shelby and Ranking Member Leahy, Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Udall:

As part of a uniquely broad coalition of interests committed to clean air, we want to express our appreciation for your support for additional appropriations for the Diesel Emissions Reduction Act (DERA) program as reflected again in the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act for FY2020. This legislation continued on the strong tradition of Congress providing robust funding for this highly cost-effective program with $87 million in funding. As we indicated in our FY2020 letter, we believe additional capacity exists to improve air quality by advancing technology that significantly reduces emissions from older heavy-duty diesel vehicles and equipment which would be retired.

Because the EPA and the states can do more, we respectfully request you support an increase in appropriations for this worthwhile program which would be in line with the last authorization level of $100 million. There continues to be a great deal of demand for DERA funding in communities across the country and the program could easily accommodate that level of funding.

Since implementation, DERA has become one of the most cost-effective federal clean air programs. EPA’s most recent estimates indicated that every $1 in federal assistance is met with $3 in non-federal matching funds, including significant investments from the private sector, and furthermore that every federal dollar generates between $5 to $21 in health and economic benefits. Moreover, states benefit because 30 percent of the funding is directed to support state programs. We understand that EPA is working on its fourth report to Congress and we believe it will show the continuing value of this program which provides an important tool to allow EPA and communities around the country to meet their Clean Air goals in the most cost-effective manner feasible.

DERA provides grants and rebates to incentivize equipment and vehicle owners to install retrofit technologies on existing heavy-duty diesel vehicles and engines, or replace engines and equipment, reducing emissions by as much as 90 percent. EPA’s most recent estimates in 2016 showcase impressive results for the program. EPA estimated that from 2009 to 2013 the program upgraded nearly 73,000 vehicles or pieces of equipment and saved over 450 million gallons of fuel. In that report, EPA estimated that total lifetime emission reductions achieved through DERA funding include 14,700 tons of particulate matter (PM) and 335,200 tons of oxides of nitrogen (NO\textsubscript{x}). According to EPA, these emission reductions yielded up to $12.6 billion in estimated health benefits. Significant funding since then continues to add to these totals, reflective of significant progress that continues to be made.
In short, the program continues to help improve air quality at the nation’s schools, construction sites, highways, railyards, and ports. Further, because of the long-lived nature of diesel heavy duty vehicles and off-road equipment, older technologies are on the road and in the field much longer. In fact, approximately 57 percent of the heavy-duty truck fleet do not come with technology to meet the most current emissions standards adopted for model year 2010.

Because the DERA program goes hand-in-glove with effective state and local air programs, the DERA Coalition urges that funding for DERA not come at the expense of critical funding for state and local air quality grants. State and local governments hold primary responsibility for preventing and controlling air pollution and rely on these grants to carry out their core obligations under the Clean Air Act, including monitoring air quality, assessing emissions impacts, developing comprehensive state implementation plans, permitting and inspecting sources, enforcing laws and regulations, and conducting public education and outreach.

The DERA voluntary program has enjoyed overwhelming bipartisan support in the Committee and in Congress generally and we are hopeful of similar support this year as well. The program has adopted many cost saving administrative practices, such as the inclusion of a rebate program applicable to school buses and construction equipment that speed the delivery of program funds with a minimum amount of red tape. The program effectively cleans our air and provides high-paying domestic jobs that underpin employment in innovative industries. Accordingly, we respectfully request $100 million in funding for Fiscal Year 2021.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Advanced Engine Systems Institute
Alliance for Vehicle Efficiency
American Association of Port Authorities
American Lung Association
American Trucking Associations
Association of American Railroads
Associated Equipment Distributors
Associated General Contractors of America
Blue Bird Corporation
Clean Air Task Force
Cook – Illinois Corporation
Cummins Inc.
Diesel Technology Forum
Environmental Defense Fund
Krapf School Bus
Lion Electric Co.
Manufacturers of Emission Controls Association
NAFA Fleet Management Association
National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services
National School Transportation Association
Neighbors for Clean Air
New York School Bus Contractors Association
Seafood Harvesters of America
Truck & Engine Manufacturers Association
Umicore Autocat USA, Inc.
United Motorcoach Association