November 29, 2021

Ms. L'Tonya Spencer-Harvey
Public Affairs Specialist/Community Involvement Coordinator
U.S. EPA-Region 4
61 Forsyth Street, SW
Atlanta, GA 30303

Dear Ms. Spencer-Harvey:

Thank you for reaching out to leaders in the Scarboro Community of Oak Ridge, Tenn. We are pleased that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Region 4, is demonstrating such a strong commitment to community engagement. In particular, we appreciate the extended effort to obtain and understand our views surrounding the proposed Environmental Management Disposal Facility and other Department of Energy (DOE) environmental cleanup projects in Oak Ridge. As representatives of organizations with a key stake in Scarboro, we recently met to discuss this project and offer our collective response in this letter.

DOE began consulting with us, along with the broader Oak Ridge community, about the EMDF project in 2015. The Scarboro Community expressed concern at that time about the original location and requested DOE consider alternative locations that were further from our community. Since those initial conversations, DOE moved the facility's proposed location another two miles west of Scarboro. Not only is the proposed disposal facility further from residents, but we understand the location exhibits more favorable groundwater and geotechnical properties as well. We are pleased to hear about this change and that DOE will avoid waste shipments through the city by using its private haul road to the proposed site.

The current cleanup progress of DOE is benefiting Oak Ridge in meaningful, tangible ways by eliminating nearby risks and hazards, creating new economic opportunities, and clearing land for expanding research and national security missions that generate many jobs for our region. On the other hand, delays caused by inadequate onsite waste disposal capacity would negatively impact us in significant and detrimental ways that include stalled cleanup progress, reduction of local jobs, adverse impact on growth, and environmental hazards near our community that will remain unaddressed for many more years.

We are confident that EMDF will reduce environmental risk and enable continued important environmental cleanup across the Oak Ridge Reservation. For these reasons, we believe the construction of EMDF is vitally important to the future of Oak Ridge, and we support its construction without delay. DOE and UCOR have proven to be transparent and upfront in their outreach, and their continued communication and information sharing has given us sufficient data to support this project. We have an ongoing relationship with the DOE and UCOR and, based on the track record of their

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secretary@oakvalleybc.com

existing disposal facility, are confident in their ability to safely build and operate this new facility in collaboration with the EPA and the state of Tennessee.

Our interest in this and other DOE cleanup projects goes beyond environmental justice in its traditional sense—we also have economic justice concerns. In the 1980s, local and national newspapers circulated an erroneous story stating Scarboro was contaminated by a mercury spill. Numerous attempts by the community to have the story corrected failed and, as a result, many residents who believed the error, including affluent ones, moved out of Scarboro. Yet further, many who wanted to build in the Scarboro community, whether adults who grew up in Scarboro or newcomers to Oak Ridge, opted to build elsewhere because it was not fiscally wise to "invest in a dying and reportedly mercury contaminated community." This left a significant wealth gap in the community and social stigma that is evident to this day. Sadly, the Scarboro residents who stayed were not compensated like other communities because there was no scientific evidence of mercury contamination in Scarboro, even as public outlets refused to recant the false story. Undoing the long-term ramifications of this injustice and building our community back into the vibrant and livable neighborhood of years past lies at the heart of our environmental justice concern.

For this reason, economic opportunities for Scarboro residents remain one of our highest priorities and areas of focus. Creating jobs through apprenticeships and other programs offered by DOE and UCOR has proven to be highly effective at fostering such opportunity and has received great interest from community youth so far. To that end, we have been collaborating ways to further such opportunities. In fact, UCOR hired several people recently, and other programs that promise additional chances for employment are planned for the upcoming year. In partnership with the EPA, we would like to take advantage of workforce development opportunities through other initiatives as well, like Justice40, that leverage a much wider range of resources to improve the quality of life for frontline communities like Scarboro.

In closing, we ask that you provide the necessary support and authorization for DOE to move forward with constructing this facility, avoiding costly delay. Again, thank you for your commitment to community involvement in this process. We hope this letter, signed by twenty-seven organizational leaders in Scarboro, is sufficient evidence of community support for this project.

Thank you for your careful consideration.

Sincerely,

Derrick Hammond
Pastor, Oak Valley Baptist Church
Councilman, Oak Ridge City Council

Deloris Collins
President, NAACP Oak Ridge/Anderson County

Tina Henderson-Porter
President, Scarboro Community Alumni Association (SCAA)

Larry Roberson
Vice President, NAACP Oak Ridge/Anderson County

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John Spratling
Member, SCAA
President/CEO, Team Investment Group of Oak Ridge, Inc.

Vanessa Spratling
Member, SCAA
Secretary, Team Investment Group of Oak Ridge, Inc.

Deborah Booker
Treasurer, SCAA

L.C. Gipson
Treasurer, Scarboro Neighborhood Watch

Henry D.C. Watson
Pastor, Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church

Darris Waters
Pastor, True Light Baptist Church

Charles Caruthers
Pastor, Scarboro Church of Christ

Erica Haigler
Pastor, Spurgeon Chapel AME Zion Church

Gary Johnson
Owner, Local Business

Cindy Johnson
Office Manager, Oak Valley Baptist Church

Clara Chambles
Resident, Scarboro Community
Life Coach, Touchstone Success Network Ministries

Barbara Spratling
Director, Scarboro Community Center

Valeria Roberson
Education Committee Member, NAACP Oak Ridge/Anderson County
Historian, Scarboro Community

Rose Weaver
Member, SCAA
Historian, Scarboro Community

Kwayu Graham
Member, SCAA

Mabrey Duff
Financial Secretary, Atomic Lodge #1301 of the IBPOEW

Trina Watson
1st Lady, Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church

Phyllis Young
Member, True Light Baptist Church

Jay Steele
Member, Scarboro Church of Christ

Gail Walker
Member, Spurgeon Chapel AME Zion Church

Thomas Moton
Owner, Home Improvement Business

Ben Stephens
Member, Oak Ridge School Board

Al Chambles
Resident, Scarboro Community
Retired Scientist, Y-12 National Security Complex
Historian, Scarboro Community

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