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January 8,

Melissa Spear
Common Ground High School
358 Springside Avenue
New Haven, CT 06515

Dear Ms. Spear,

It is with great pleasure that I write this letter of commitment for the 2015 Green Jobs Corps -- Creating a New Generation of New Haven Environmental Justice Leaders as a partner to the Common Ground High School. The Green Job Corps program is a natural fit to the Urban Resource Initiative's (URI) GreenSkills urban forestry program in which high school students are paid to learn about and plant trees throughout New Haven. We have very successfully partnered with Common Ground since the fall of 2007. GreenSkills aims to cultivate job skills, inspire environmental involvement and action, and allow for mentoring relationships between Yale students and New Haven high school students. We are committed to providing our staff to train a group of 26 Common Ground students next year, and provide work-based experiences focused on green infrastructure projects that have a positive impact on air and water quality.

URI has adopted a multi-layered learning opportunity serving both Yale graduate students and high school students. Our team of Yale School of Forestry graduate students will work with 20 Common Ground students during the academic year to plant 100 trees in predominately low-income neighborhoods. Through the planting we will teach them concrete job skills about site assessments, species selection, street tree planting procedures, as well as soft job skills. The students will also be trained to conduct outreach to encourage residents in the predominately lower-income communities to request street trees. Our tree planting program is based upon planting trees on request, which creates an opportunity to engage adjacent property owners or renters in the long-term stewardship of newly planted trees.

During the summer URI staff will support a smaller team of 6 Common Ground students to work alongside volunteers through URI's Community Greenspace program. Green Job Corps interns will focus on intensive stewardship at 4-6 neighborhood Greenspaces, including ones that are designated "urban oases" located in predominately low-income neighborhoods. Lastly, the students will also have opportunities to engage in stewardship of bioswales previously installed by URI in the West River Watershed.

We believe the Green Jobs Corps creates a great opportunity for inner-city high school students to be engaged in green infrastructure strategies that have a significant impact on clean air and clean water objectives. We look forward working in partnership with Common Ground and hope the EPA Environmental Justice Small Grants Program finds our program worthy of support.

Sincerely,
Colleen Murphy-Dunning, URI Director