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EPA Urging USVI, Other Region 2 Members to Apply for \$500 Million in Available Funding for Clean School Buses

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The Biden Administration through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has announced that \$500 million is now available for school districts and other eligible school bus operators and contractors to begin replacing the nation's fleet of school buses with clean, American-made, zero-emission buses.

This \$500 million represents the first round of funding out of the unprecedented \$5 billion investment for low and zero-emission school buses over the next five years, secured through President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the EPA said.

The investment is part of an effort to reduce greenhouse gas pollution, provide cleaner air around schools and communities, and better protect children's health, according to the release.

"This new funding can make a big impact in New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands and Tribal nations. I urge all eligible school districts to apply," said EPA Regional Administrator Lisa F. Garcia. "Over the next five years, this program will deliver \$5 billion to school districts to improve our bus fleets and improve health and safety for our kids and communities."

The EPA said diesel air pollution is linked to asthma and other health problems that hurt our communities and cause students to miss school, particularly in communities of color and Tribal communities. New, zero-emission and low-emission buses will not only reduce greenhouse gas emissions, but produce cleaner air for students, bus drivers, school staff working near the bus loading areas, and the communities that the buses drive through each day. The reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from these bus replacements will help to address the outsized role of the transportation sector on fueling climate change. In addition, zero-emission buses cost less for school districts to operate than diesel buses, and the electricity stored in zero-emission school buses can transmit energy back to the grid to meet extra energy demand or provide energy to communities during power outages.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law allows EPA to prioritize applications that will replace buses serving high-need local education agencies, Tribal Schools, and rural areas, the EPA said. This approach supports President Biden's Justice40 initiative to direct at least 40 percent of the benefits of certain government investments to underserved communities. EPA's Clean School Bus Program will strive to meet this commitment and advance environmental justice and equity considerations into all aspects of our work.

In addition, EPA said it will focus education and outreach efforts to underserved communities, including partnering with stakeholders to reach communities that may have never applied for a Federal grant or rebate. Portions of the rebates can also be used to install electric vehicle charging infrastructure so that schools can make chargers available for the new buses. The rebate program will select awardees through a lottery system.

This is the first competition that EPA is running through the Clean School Bus program. The Agency will also launch a grant competition later this year. Further Clean School Bus competitions funded by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will be run every year over the next five years.