

November 20, 2020

Senator Richard Shelby
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Nita M. Lowey
Chairwoman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Senator Patrick Leahy
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Representative Kay Granger
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Shelby, Chairwoman Lowey, Ranking Member Leahy and Ranking Member Granger:

On behalf of our millions of members and supporters across the country, we respectfully request that you protect clean water and our public health by including strong water infrastructure funding in Fiscal Year 2021 (FY21). A final funding package should meet or exceed the spending levels in the House's FY21 bills and should include the emergency titles to ensure additional support for communities hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Effective and safe water infrastructure is essential to public health and our environment, however, our water infrastructure is badly outdated and failing across the country. Too many communities, especially communities of color and low income communities, have to worry about whether their water is poisoning their families or even still lack indoor plumbing. Every year, billions of gallons of sewage overflows and stormwater runoff pollute our beaches, rivers, and other waterways. Nearly 2000 water systems in all 50 states had levels of lead contamination above EPA's action level according to a 2016 review¹.

Federal funding for water infrastructure has decreased dramatically, and state and local governments often lack the resources to make needed infrastructure improvements, especially now as the pandemic has pushed these budgets to a breaking point. The pandemic has also exacerbated a mounting water affordability crisis as millions of people face water shutoffs due to late or non-payment at a time when having access to clean water is more important than ever.

Congress must step in and provide desperately needed assistance. By boldly investing in water infrastructure, Congress can not only protect our drinking water and public health, both in this time of crisis and beyond, but also spur economic activity and create much needed jobs. For these reasons, we respectfully request that you include **\$11.7 billion** in funding for the following provisions from the House Interior and Environment spending bill and emergency titles for FY21:

¹ <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2016/03/11/nearly-2000-water-systems-fail-lead-tests/81220466/>

- \$10.2 billion for Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds, including:
 - \$1.64 billion for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund and \$1.13 billion for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, with not less than 10 percent of CWSRF funds and 14 percent of DWSRF funds distributed to disadvantaged communities as additional subsidization, and not less than 10 percent of CWSRF funds used for green projects;
 - An additional \$6.35 billion for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund and \$3.85 billion for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, with not less than 40 percent of these funds distributed to disadvantaged communities as additional subsidization, and not less than 25 percent used for green projects;
- Over \$1 billion for the Reducing Lead in Drinking Water program, and eliminate non-federal cost share for grants through this program that provide assistance to low-income households.
- \$76 million for the Lead Contamination in School Drinking Water program; we ask that this money help schools and daycare centers replace lead-bearing water fountains and prevent this potent neurotoxin from entering the drinking water of children, who are particularly susceptible to the negative effects of lead.
- \$456.7 million for Sewer Overflow Control Grants, with at least 30 percent set aside for green infrastructure.
- \$12.9 million in additional funding for scientific and regulatory work on per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). We also ask that funding for PFAS remediation be included in the actual FY21 spending bills.

Congress should also specify that funding to water utilities is contingent on provisions that prohibit water shut-offs for non-payment during the COVID-19 pandemic and establish mandatory safe water reconnections, as well as lenient repayment plans, debt forgiveness, affordable rate structures, and at least 120 days for consumers to regain their financial footing before a shutoff moratorium could be lifted.

Although the funding levels and policies mentioned above are not all we need to fix our water infrastructure crisis, they are a good down payment and starting point. Again, we urge Congress to include robust funding for water infrastructure in the final FY21 package to ensure that every community and family in this country has access to the clean water they need to stay healthy and thrive.

Sincerely,

Alabama Rivers Alliance
 Alliance for the Great Lakes
 American Rivers
 American Sustainable Business Council
 Amigos Bravos

Anacostia Watershed Society
 Aquashicola/Pohopoco Watershed
 Conservancy
 Arizona PIRG
 Black Farmers and Ranchers New Mexico

Black Warrior Riverkeeper
Bucks County Audubon Society
Cahaba River Society
Cahaba Riverkeeper
CalPIRG
Capital Region Land Conservancy
Clean Air Council
Clean Water Action
Colorado Farm and Food Alliance
Colorado Latino Forum
COPIRG
Eastern PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine
Reclamation
Endangered Habitats League
Environment America
Environment California
Environment Colorado
Environment Connecticut
Environment Florida
Environment Georgia
Environment Maine
Environment Maryland
Environment Massachusetts
Environment Michigan
Environment Minnesota
Environment Missouri
Environment New Jersey
Environment North Carolina
Environment Oregon
Environment Texas
Environment Virginia
Environment Washington
Environmental Law & Policy Center
Environmental Working Group
For Love of Water (FLOW)
Fountain Valley Clean Water Coalition
Freshwater Future
Friends of the Cacapon River

Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association
GreenLatinos
GreenTreks Network, Inc.
Hispanic Access Foundation
Illinois PIRG
Lancaster Conservancy
League of Conservation Voters
Little River Waterkeeper
Maryland PIRG
Massachusetts Rivers Alliance
MassPIRG
National Parks Conservation Association
National Wildlife Federation
Natural Resources Defense Council
NC Conservation Network
NYenvironcom
OSPIRG
Our Children's Earth Foundation
PennEnvironment
PennPIRG
Pennsylvania Council of Churches
Pocono Heritage Land Trust
Potomac Conservancy
Rachel Carson Council
Rappahannock League for Environmental
Protection
River Network
Sierra Club
Southeast Rural Community Assistance
Project, Inc.
Southern Environmental Law Center
Tennessee Clean Water Network
Tennessee Riverkeeper
TexPIRG
Upstream Alliance
Waterkeeper Alliance
Wisconsin Environment