Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 15, 2016

The Honorable Harold Rogers
Chairman
Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
Appropriations Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Chairman
Appropriations Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Ranking Member
Appropriations Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Lowey, Chairman Calvert, and Ranking Member McCollum:

We write to reiterate our strong support for robust funding for clean and safe water infrastructure by requesting a minimum of $2 billion for the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (Clean Water SRF) and $2 billion for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (Drinking Water SRF) in the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) fiscal year 2017 funding package.

The critical need for Federal investment in our water infrastructure is without question. In recent memory, we have all witnessed the impacts of failed water and wastewater treatment infrastructure, ranging from ruptured pipes; to sewage overflows or stormwater runoff that contaminate local waters; to flawed drinking water treatment processes that deliver contaminated water to peoples' homes and businesses.

From Milwaukee, Wisconsin to Washington, D.C., from Alamosa, Colorado to Charleston, West Virginia, and from Toledo, Ohio to Flint, Michigan, large communities and small towns have suffered the consequences of failed water and wastewater systems that have led to public health emergencies, outbreaks of water contaminated by disease, algal blooms or other toxic materials, and, unfortunately, even to death. In addition, these infrastructure failures are costing businesses, individuals, and state and local governments millions of dollars in emergency repairs and responses and in lost revenues.

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Simply put – the health and safety of our communities depend on safe, reliable, and efficient water and wastewater treatment systems, including the pipes that distribute treated water to our homes and businesses or that convey domestic and industrial wastes for appropriate treatment. Yet, the condition of much of our water and wastewater infrastructure is declining or quickly nearing the end of its useful life. According to the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) 2013 Report Card for America's Infrastructure, our nation's systems of drinking water and wastewater infrastructure each receive a "D" rating. Moreover, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) latest survey of capital improvement needs for public water systems, we need to invest more than $384 billion in drinking water infrastructure improvements over the next 20 years to ensure the delivery of safe water in compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act, and an additional $270 billion to meet the nation's wastewater and stormwater treatment and collection needs.

Decades ago, Congress created two, distinct programs to maintain a Federal commitment to addressing local water and wastewater infrastructure needs – the Drinking Water SRF and the Clean Water SRF. Through SRFs investment programs, states provide loans and other financial assistance to local communities or utilities to support upgrades and replacements of water distribution pipelines, treatment plants, sewer lines, stormwater conveyances, and other similar infrastructure. This funding is critical as it helps communities maintain safe and effective water infrastructure and affords states the flexibility to fund their highest-priorities. Yet, as public health and science demand more stringent drinking water and wastewater treatment standards and more comprehensive efforts to target ongoing sources of pollution, Congress must maintain this critical partnership with States and local communities to meet this growing, critical, and urgent investment need.

Robust funding of these critical financing authorities not only helps protect public health, and ensure safer and clean water, but it also is vital to our economy. There is no business that can operate without access to a reliable supply of clean water. In addition, property values, tourism, and recreational and commercial fishing, also rely on clean water and provide long-term benefits to our communities. According to data from the National Utility Contractors Association (NUCA), for every $1 billion in investment in water-related infrastructure, approximately 27,000 new jobs are added; $3.4 billion is added to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP); and personal (household) spending is increased by $1.06 billion.

While we all understand the difficult fiscal choices we must make in Washington, the tragedies of Toledo, Flint, and Charleston need to stop – and the quickest way to accomplish this goal is to provide the necessary resources our States, our communities, and our citizens are demanding. The Clean Water SRF and the Drinking Water SRF remain critical tools for pollution prevention, economic growth, and public health. Therefore, we urge you to renew the federal commitment to water infrastructure by funding these programs at levels that will begin to reduce the backlog of repair and replacement projects for these vital systems.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, and for your continued commitment to clean and safe water for our communities.

Sincerely,

Peter DeFazio
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

Frank Pallone, Jr.
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce

Grace F. Napolitano
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Water Resources
and Environment

Paul Tonko
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Environment
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