March 22, 2017

The Honorable Bob Gibbs  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2446 Rayburn Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Steve Chabot  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2371 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Gibbs and Chabot:

On behalf of the nation’s mayors, cities, and counties, we are writing to express our support for your bill the *Water Quality Improvement Act (H.R. 465)*, and we urge your colleagues to support it as well. The legislation would codify the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Integrated Planning and Financial Capability policies as useful tools for local governments to comprehensively deal with wastewater and stormwater investments as well as unfunded mandates.

Local governments are at a crossroads. Cities and counties spend over $115 billion per year to provide safe and reliable water and sewer services and maintain a vast physical infrastructure of pipes, pumps and plants. While we thank Congress for providing $2 billion annually to the water and wastewater State Revolving Fund programs, these loans are not enough to cover the estimated costs to maintain and replace our aging infrastructure. Additionally, local governments, our residents, and businesses must spend additional resources to comply with numerous environment and non-environmental federal and state unfunded mandates, which further limits the money available for water infrastructure.

Furthermore, both the state and EPA’s enforcement agencies increasingly regulate in a silo. While our cities and counties may be working to meet a multitude of standards in various water and wastewater requirements, the states and EPA often do not collaborate across the policy programs. This often create further, unnecessary unfunded mandates. However, the legislation would address many of these concerns by creating a policy shift that costs no federal money and creates some spending flexibility for our citizens.

Specifically, the bill would allow local governments to work with their state and EPA to prioritize investment in wet weather overflows and flooding collectively, rather than individually, by codifying various EPA memorandums on water tools and affordability. And the bill would allow consideration of other service costs including drinking water. Since our water and wastewater systems are paid for by the ratepayers, the bill will help reduce costs for a substantial number of our low-income citizens who spend a significant portion of their income on water and wastewater bills. The measure would also allow local governments who undertake integrated planning to incorporate green infrastructure...
components into municipal stormwater, combined sewer overflow (CSO) and other water plans in a more cost effective way.

Thank you again for your leadership on this issue. On behalf of the nation’s cities, counties and mayors, we thank you for your consideration of our request. If you have any questions, please contact us: Carolyn Berndt (NLC) at 202-626-3101 or Berndt@nlc.org; Julie Ufner (NACo) at 202-942-4269 or jufner@naco.org; or Judy Sheahan (USCM) at 202-861-6775 or jsheahan@usmayors.org.

Sincerely,

Tom Cochran
CEO and Executive Director
The U.S. Conference of Mayors

Matthew D. Chase
Executive Director
National Association of Counties

Clarence E. Anthony
CEO and Executive Director
National League of Cities

cc: Members of the House