July 17, 2017

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mike Simpson
Chairman
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

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

The Honorable Marcy Kaptur
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Frelinghuysen, Ranking Member Lowey, Chairman Simpson, and Ranking Member Kaptur:

On behalf of America’s 19,000 cities and towns, I write to thank you for your leadership in passing an Energy and Water Development Appropriations Bill that preserves funding for city priorities like the Weatherization Assistance Program and State Energy Program that were targeted for elimination in the President’s budget proposal.

At the same time, city leaders are concerned that the bill lacks robust funding for programs that have a tremendous impact of the lives of our most vulnerable citizens and shifts the cost of intergovernmental projects and services from the federal level to municipal governments. For many cities, particularly small and rural communities with a limited tax-base, the cost shift may be too great to be made up for with local revenue.

Cities are growing the job market and driving the U.S. economy. Cities are home to 86 percent of the nation’s population, 88 percent of total real income, and 91 percent of real gross domestic product. Local governments invest $7 trillion annually on services residents expect.

City leaders are at the forefront of efforts to encourage energy conservation, improve energy efficiency and invest in renewable energy in their communities. City-led initiatives have resulted in millions of dollars in energy savings, helping residents and businesses save on their energy bills, along with taxpayer savings from municipal government operations. Federal programs under the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy, including the Weatherization Assistance Program and the State Energy Program, create jobs and grow the economy. Now is the wrong time for Congress to stall these advances by pulling back on critical investments in cities.
As the voice of cities in Washington, NLC appreciates the work of the committee to preserve the Weatherization Assistance Program, State Energy Program and other programs important to cities and towns by rejecting their proposed elimination. We are concerned, however, that the proposed $1 billion cut to the Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy will hinder national and local efforts to increase energy savings and promote renewable energy development through programs such as the Better Buildings Challenge and SunShot. To advance the economic benefits and job creation these programs have created, robust funding is needed for all of these programs.

As the FY18 budget and appropriations process continues, we look forward to working with Members of Congress in both Chambers to raise the budget caps to a level sufficient for meeting the responsibilities that citizens expect from their elected representatives. Additionally, we urge every Member of Congress to seek the direct feedback of local elected officials in their home states and congressional districts. Please consider NLC a resource to that end by contacting Carolyn Berndt, NLC’s Program Director for Sustainability, at 202-626-3101 or berndt@nlc.org.

Sincerely,

Clarence E. Anthony  
CEO and Executive Director