



THE UNITED STATES
CONFERENCE OF MAYORS



March 23, 2021

The Honorable Thomas Carper
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and
Public Works
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and
Public Works
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Carper and Ranking Member Capito,

On behalf of the nation's mayors, cities and counties, we thank you for introducing bipartisan legislation to address our nation's water infrastructure needs. The Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act of 2021 will help address the many water infrastructure challenges that communities face. Local governments recognize the threat posed to our nation's health and safety as it faces aging water and wastewater infrastructure and an increased risk for both natural and human made disasters.

Local leaders support the Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act as a reliable, long-term and increased federal investment in water infrastructure, watershed protection, and the protection of water resources and facilities from physical, chemical and cybersecurity threats.

In particular, we thank you for including the reauthorization of the Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund (DWSRF) and the reauthorization of the Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund (CWSRF). The SRF programs provide capitalization grants to states who, in turn, make low interest loans to local communities and utilities for water infrastructure projects. We appreciate the amendments to the DWSRF and CWSRF programs to enable more communities to access funding for projects to improve their drinking water and wastewater infrastructure systems.

Our organizations strongly support the DWSRF and CWSRF programs, which are essential tools for communities to provide clean and safe water for residents and businesses. Since local governments provide over 95 percent of the total funding for water infrastructure and the nation's growing water infrastructure needs, it is evident that our country must make substantial investments to repair and replace our nation's aging water infrastructure through the SRF programs and the other critical programs included in the legislation. We urge Congress to fully fund these programs and to encourage states to provide more SRF grants, negative interest loans and principal forgiveness to small, rural and disadvantaged communities unable to meet their needs solely with loans.

Additionally, we appreciate the commitment to addressing resilience and climate change in our nation's water infrastructure. As owners and operators of public works facilities, the availability of grants to assist in the planning, design and construction of projects to increase the resilience or adaptability of water systems is critical.

Finally, local governments look forward to partnering with the federal government to address cybersecurity threats and enhancing monitoring, affordability, efficiency and safety of drinking water and wastewater. We appreciate the bill's provisions that would enhance the safety of drinking water and provide financial and technical assistance to local governments to design, implement and evaluate appropriate water conservation measures.

As the coronavirus pandemic continues, local governments continue to face budget shortfalls and are struggling to support residents and businesses, provide services, keep essential workers employed and protect public health through vaccine administration. Moreover, local water and wastewater utilities are committed to ensuring all customers have access to clean and safe water to maintain public health. This, however, has come at a cost to utilities, which are overwhelmingly funded by local ratepayers, and are now facing a significant drop in utility revenue essential to providing water service, continuing operations and making capital investments. We thank you for the recent passage of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (P.L. 117-2), which provides additional relief to this pandemic's frontline workers.

Thank you for your leadership on these issues, and we look forward to working with you on the Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure Act of 2021 and long-term solutions to addressing our nation's water infrastructure. Local governments remained committed to meeting the growing water infrastructure needs in our communities. We urge the federal government to remain a committed partner in this important endeavor.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact our staff: Judy Sheahan (USCM) at jsheahan@usmayors.org; Carolyn Berndt (NLC) at berndt@nlc.org; or Adam Pugh (NACo) at apugh@naco.org.

Sincerely,



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



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



Matthew D. Chase
CEO and Executive Director
National Association of Counties

CC: Members of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee