

April 1, 2019

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

The Honorable Dave Joyce  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Interior,  
Environment, and Related Agencies  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair McCollum and Ranking Member Joyce:

Last year, Congress came together to overwhelmingly pass into law the bipartisan *Water Infrastructure Improvement Act* (Public Law No: 115-436), which we sponsored and cosponsored. The legislation codified the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA or Agency) Integrated Planning (IP) Framework to provide local communities with critical flexibilities in meeting their Clean Water Act (CWA) obligations and ensuring our constituents continue receiving safe, reliable, and affordable clean water services. The bill also included a provision which establishes an office of Municipal Ombudsman within EPA to provide municipalities with a dedicated point of contact within the Agency who can represent their interests to help them comply with their CWA and other environmental obligations, as well as ensure Agency policies are being implemented appropriately at the local level.

As you begin work on the Fiscal Year 2020 (FY20) Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we request that \$2 million in new funding be provided to help EPA implement the IP law and establish the office of Municipal Ombudsman.

Public clean water utilities and the communities they serve are being asked to do more with less as they deal with increasing challenges of aging infrastructure, continued water quality issues, growing federal compliance obligations, and affordability pressures. With EPA estimating that our nation's water and wastewater infrastructure will require more than \$650 billion in investment over the next 20 years just to maintain current levels of service, the challenges will only grow.

The integrated planning approach helps communities prioritize their specific clean water obligations and better manage costs over time. EPA will need to work collaboratively with the states and municipalities to build awareness of this voluntary approach. Directing federal resources toward implementation will help ensure EPA has the resources to fully implement the law and assist the states and interested municipalities.

Additionally, the establishment of a Municipal Ombudsman office within EPA is important to assist communities, both small and large, navigate CWA regulatory compliance. The ombudsman will provide a crucial role as it acts as a liaison between EPA and the municipal regulated community to help address regulatory concerns.

Communities across the country, and the constituents we represent, are depending on these new tools that Congress provided them with to ensure their families, homes, and businesses have the essential services they need to grow their local economies and protect public health and the environment. We urge your strong support for \$2 million in FY20 to fund implementation of the IP law and the Office of the Municipal Ombudsman at EPA. Thank you in advance for your consideration.



Bob Gibbs  
Member of Congress



Grace Napolitano  
Member of Congress



Steve Chabot  
Member of Congress



Lloyd Smucker  
Member of Congress



Cheri Bustos  
Member of Congress