



August 10, 2021

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Senate Majority Leader  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Speaker Pelosi:

On behalf of the hundreds of public drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater agencies our associations represent nationwide, NACWA and AMWA applaud the 117<sup>th</sup> Congress for its attention to improving our country's critical infrastructure. Few things could be more fundamental to life and well-being than the strength of our nation's public water infrastructure.

As infrastructure negotiations advance, we cannot reiterate enough the need for robust new direct federal investment to help communities provide clean and safe water. We say *help*, because the data shows that clean and safe water are overwhelmingly locally- and state- funded in the United States. A strong federal partner is needed to help communities provide these services affordably and reliably while meeting growing water challenges.

As attention grows around the budget resolution, we are encouraged that the budget resolution includes meeting the climate challenge as a top priority. We write to underscore how important this is to the provision of drinking water and clean water service.

At its heart, climate is a water issue. Drinking water systems must consider climate factors as they develop sustainable water supplies, and clean water agencies do the same as they work to treat and discharge clean water. Utilities are faced with adapting to changing conditions to maintain water supply quality and quantity, avoid water quality impairments, safely manage stormwater, prevent overflows, protect homes and property, and continue advancing safe drinking water and clean water goals. And they must do all of this while their ratepayers – particularly vulnerable, low-income customers – must deal with growing water affordability challenges.

These challenges are only projected to grow in the years ahead. Federal investment for both climate change mitigation and adaptation are therefore imperative to ensure sustainable water resource management and community resilience.

Crucially, while local drinking water and clean water agencies must prioritize building operational resilience to climate-related impacts that cannot be avoided, they can also be partners in mitigation. Many water systems are making investments to reduce emissions and reliance on fossil fuels through energy and water efficiency efforts and investments in generating renewable energy. Water and energy resources are intertwined: energy generation is highly reliant on water,

and water treatment and distribution are heavily reliant on energy. Energy consumption by public drinking water and wastewater utilities can represent 30%-40% of a municipality's energy bill<sup>1</sup>.

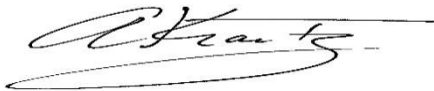
The energy-water nexus is also significant at a household level. Improvements in household water efficiency can help reduce water consumption and associated water heating and cooling costs. These efficiency upgrades also contribute to water conservation efforts that reduce costs so that families can more easily afford their utility bills.

As you work to develop the details of the budget resolution, we urge the following:

- Incorporate significant, flexible financial resources for local communities and drinking water and clean water utilities to build resilience and adapt to the unique impacts they are facing, including through sustainable water resource management.
- Utilize programs through the Department of Energy to address the energy-water nexus as part of a targeted strategy for achieving climate goals.
- Consider expanding opportunities for residential water efficiency upgrades, such as through the Department of Energy's Weatherization Assistance program.
- Leverage existing programs for addressing wet weather conditions, including EPA's Sewer Overflow and Stormwater Reuse grant program.
- Provide resources for drinking water and wastewater systems to adapt their infrastructure to withstand the effects of climate change and extreme weather, including through new EPA programs for this purpose included within the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act*.
- Support for households facing water insecurity. The challenges households face in affording water and sewer bills gained prominence during the pandemic. We applaud Congress for providing emergency funding to help address low-income household water arrears and urge additional and permanent funding for this persistent challenge.

Across the country, communities are increasingly grappling with water supply and quality challenges related to climate change. We urge you to use the forthcoming budget resolution as a tool to advance critical investments that will strengthen our country's resilience and meet the water challenges of today and tomorrow.

Sincerely,



Adam Krantz  
Chief Executive Officer  
National Association of Clean Water Agencies



Diane VanDe Hei  
Chief Executive Officer  
Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies

cc: Senate Committees on Budget, Appropriations, Environment and Public Works, Energy and Natural Resources, and Health, Environment, Labor & Pensions; House Committees on Budget, Appropriations, Transportation & Infrastructure, and Energy & Commerce.

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<sup>1</sup> CRS: *Energy-Water Nexus: The Water Sector's Energy Use*. January 14, 2017.