



September 29, 2021

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition and our more than 170 member organizations, I urge Congress support comprehensive infrastructure legislation and take bold action to address climate change.

In the coming days the House will vote on the first part of this agenda. H.R. 3684, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, is legislation that can begin to address the growing infrastructure crisis impacting communities nationwide. We ask you to support this meaningful bill to help ensure safe, clean, and affordable water is available to all.

The Great Lakes region – like our nation – faces a water infrastructure crisis that is impacting the health of people and communities. Sewage contamination closes beaches. Lead pipes poison drinking water. Water main breaks cause sink holes in city streets. This crisis is further exacerbated by climate change as more intense storms flood our communities, overwhelm our sewer systems contaminating drinking water sources, and push our current infrastructure past its limits.

Our communities are grappling with crumbling and unsafe drinking water and wastewater infrastructure. A staggering \$188 billion over the next 20 years is needed to improve, upgrade, and repair systems in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.¹² This work is increasingly unaffordable for communities and residents, as the federal contribution to water infrastructure has declined precipitously over the last four decades, falling from 63 percent of water infrastructure spending in the 1970s to 9 percent today. Too often these costs are being passed on to those who can least afford it, disproportionately impacting communities that have historically borne the brunt of environmental injustice with water utility bills doubling or tripling over the last decade.³

Moreover, the Great Lakes basin is heavily impacted by climate change with flooding and erosion becoming more frequent and severe, as extreme weather events compound the effects of fluctuating lake levels. These fluctuations are only expected to become more rapid and extreme in the future evidenced by record highs followed by record lows just in the last decade. The disastrous impacts of flooding, transportation shutdowns, and sewage overflows that Great Lakes communities experienced across the basin this summer are a direct result of under investments in our water infrastructure and the impacts of climate change.

¹ <https://www.epa.gov/dwsrf/epas-6th-drinking-water-infrastructure-needs-survey-and-assessment>

² <https://www.epa.gov/cwns/clean-watersheds-needs-survey-cwns-2012-report-and-data>

³ <https://www.apmreports.org/story/2019/02/07/great-lakes-water-shutoffs>

Investing in our region's water infrastructure not only protects public health but allows for important infrastructure upgrades that improve the resiliency of our communities, reduce maintenance and operational costs, and create good-paying, local jobs. H.R. 3684, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, would result in significant investments over the next 5-years that include:

Drinking Water, Wastewater, and Stormwater Infrastructure:

- ✓ \$34.5 billion for the *Clean Water State Revolving Fund*
- ✓ \$32 billion for the *Drinking Water State Revolving Fund*

Addressing Lead and Emerging Contaminants:

- ✓ \$15 billion for *Lead service line replacement*
- ✓ \$10 billion to address *Emerging Contaminants*

Ecosystem Restoration:

- ✓ \$1 billion for the *Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI)*

It is critical we begin to address this infrastructure crisis that hamstring communities and disproportionately impacts low-income and minority households facing unsafe and unaffordable water. Fixing our region's failing infrastructure and investing in our most underserved communities can put people to work, set the stage for economic revitalization in our towns and cities, and ensure safe, clean, and affordable water is available to all. Our region stands ready to get to work, delaying action will only make the problems worse and more expensive to solve.

We are pleased to offer our support for these infrastructure investments. However, action is needed to protect the Great Lakes from climate change. We urge Congress to quickly reach an agreement on the second part of this agenda that leads to passage of legislation advancing bold climate action in the coming weeks.

If you have any questions please contact our Senior Legislative Analyst, Alexis J. Lopez-Cepero, at alopez-cepero@npca.org.

Sincerely,



Laura Rubin
Director