

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 29, 2019

The Honorable Sanford Bishop
Chair
Subcommittee on Agriculture
House Appropriations Committee
2362-A Rayburn House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jeff Fortenberry
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Agriculture
House Appropriations Committee
1203 Longworth House Office Building
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Bishop and Ranking Member Fortenberry:

We would like to thank the Members of the Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee for their continued support of vital water infrastructure and technical assistance funding for rural and small communities through programs under the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). As the subcommittee moves forward with the consideration of agriculture appropriations for fiscal year (FY) 2020, we write to respectfully request the following funding levels:

USDA Water and Sewer Loan and Grant program: \$1 billion

USDA Circuit Rider program: at least \$19.57 million

Farm Service Agency (FSA) Grassroots Source Water Protection program: at least \$6.5 million

Small and rural communities have an important public responsibility of complying with all applicable federal Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water Act regulations in order to supply the public with safe drinking water and sanitation. Most U.S. water utilities are small; over 91 percent of the country's 50,259 drinking water systems serve communities with fewer than 10,000 people and approximately 80 percent of the country's over 15,000 wastewater systems serve fewer than 10,000 people. Unfortunately, due to limited economies of scale and lack of technical expertise, small and rural communities often have difficulty complying with federal mandates. Collectively, the USDA Water and Sewer Loan and Grant program, the USDA Circuit Rider program and the FSA Grassroots Source Water Protection program are essential in helping small and rural communities overcome their limitations in providing safe and affordable drinking water and sanitation.

The USDA Water and Sewer Loan and Grant program helps to construct water and wastewater infrastructure through grants and loans provided at reasonable rates and terms. The current backlog for the USDA Water and Sewer Loan and Grant program is approximately \$3 billion. This backlog represents small and rural community water infrastructure projects that are

unable to access alternative sources of funding. Without this assistance, many communities would not have the means to construct new water systems, expand existing systems, or comply with federal mandates. Thus, we respectfully urge the subcommittee to include \$1 billion in the FY 2020 appropriations for the USDA Water and Sewer Loan and Grant program to address the current USDA backlog.

The USDA Circuit Rider program is a hugely successful USDA local initiative that uses appropriated funds to provide the necessary technical expertise and training to rural communities. This program provides the primary support for communities to operate safe and clean drinking water systems and helps to ensure compliance with current water regulations. Circuit riders are in the field every day helping these communities with water system compliance, operations, maintenance, management, and training. This assistance protects the federal government's sizable investment in rural water infrastructure. We respectfully request the USDA Circuit Rider program to be funded at a minimum of \$19.57 million to continue maintaining the number of full-time employees necessary to fulfill the important mission of this program.

The FSA Grassroots Source Water Protection Program provides our rural communities with the technical assistance necessary to improve water quality and provide safe drinking water. The source water program provides each state with one full-time staff member to coordinate and assist our rural communities in the implementation of source water protection plans. Without adequate funding for the FSA Grassroots Source Water Protection program, water quality in rural communities across the nation will be at risk. Thus, we respectfully request that the subcommittee continue funding this program at \$6.5 million.

State rural water associations have continually utilized the resources provided under these programs to serve millions of Americans across the nation, including the U.S. territories. Failure to fund these programs at the requested levels will cause irreparable and long-lasting harm to community water systems throughout the U.S. and the Americans who rely upon them. We appreciate your consideration and your immediate attention to these programs.

Sincerely,



John Katko
Member of Congress



Antonio Delgado
Member of Congress



Tulsi Gabbard
Member of Congress



Elise M. Stefanik
Member of Congress



Paul Tonko
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Peter Welch
Member of Congress



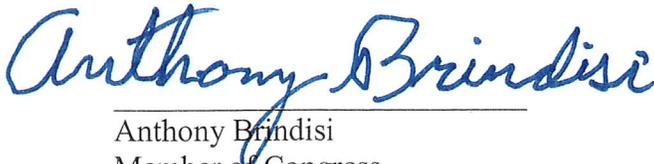
David Scott
Member of Congress



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress



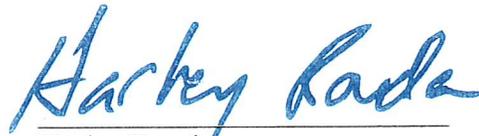
Anthony Brindisi
Member of Congress



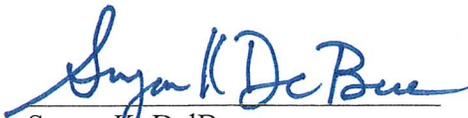
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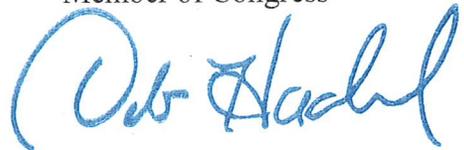
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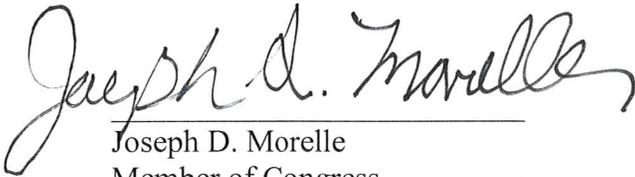
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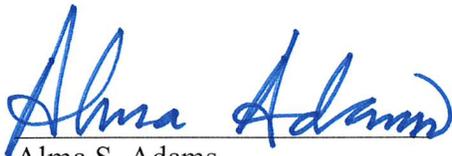
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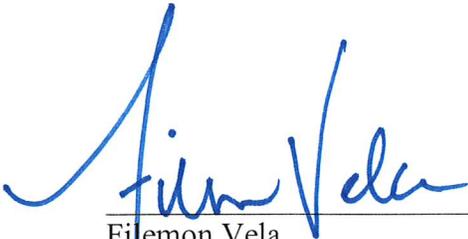
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Filemon Vela
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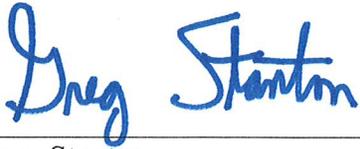
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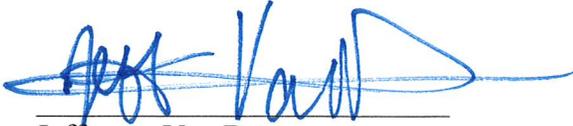
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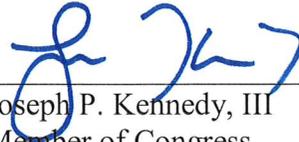
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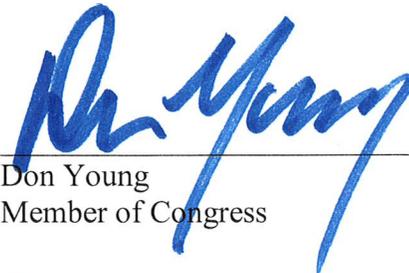
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Member of Congress



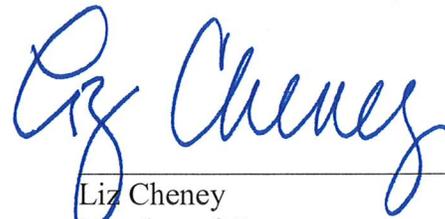
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