

Date

The Honorable Fname Lname
[Capitol Hill Address]
Washington, DC 20515 [20510]

Dear Representative or Senator:

On behalf of the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition, welcome to the 116th Congress! We look forward to working with you to preserve, protect, and restore our Great Lakes—a resource that more than 30 million Americans depend on for their drinking water.

Since 2004, our Coalition of over 150 non-governmental organizations has successfully fought to implement a strong Great Lakes restoration plan with federal funds to clean up toxic pollution that threatens people and wildlife, reduce polluted runoff that causes harmful algal blooms, stop invasive species that harm fish and wildlife and outdoor recreation, reverse habitat destruction that harms the environment and hurts the economy, and fix the region's aging infrastructure. Federal investments are producing results in communities across our eight-state region of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York.

Even with the results we are seeing, serious threats remain. Our changing climate is exacerbating all our region's challenges. Great Lakes rivers and harbors are still contaminated with toxic sediment, stunting the development and threatening the health of too many Great Lakes communities. Harmful runoff from farm fields continues to pollute our waters causing toxic algae that threatens water systems, public health, and economic vitality. Habitat loss and aquatic invasive species continue to damage our region's outdoor way of life. And communities across the Great Lakes region continue to grapple with crumbling, antiquated drinking water and wastewater infrastructure and are faced with a staggering \$179 billion over the next 20 years for needed improvements, upgrades, and repairs in the eight-state region. Many of these threats disproportionately impact people that have historically borne the brunt of environmental injustice underscoring an urgency to address these issues for everyone in the region.

We have solutions to these problems. Congress must continue to fund the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), Farm Bill conservation programs, and other fundamental restoration programs that produce results. Congressional investments can help communities replace lead pipes, address emerging contaminants like PFAS, end polluted stormwater runoff, and keep water affordable and safe for everyone. Congress must support action to stop Asian carp and other aquatic invasive species from invading the Great Lakes. Congress must support mitigating the damage from climate pollution to help the Great Lakes adapt to a changing climate. We also need strong clean water protections, as well as institutions that are adequately staffed and funded to enforce protections that we all depend on.

Urgent action is needed to preserve, protect, and restore the Great Lakes because the longer we wait, the more expensive and difficult it is to solve the problems facing the region. We are ready to help you. Please do not hesitate to contact our Coalition's policy director, Chad Lord, to talk about how we can help achieve our shared goals. He can be reached at (202) 454-3385 or clord@npca.org.

Congratulations on your election.

Sincerely,

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