

September 20, 2021

Honorable Kathy Hochul
Governor of New York State
Executive Chamber
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we congratulate you on becoming the 57th Governor of New York State, and we now look forward to working with you and your administration to tackle New York's clean water infrastructure needs. We are writing to express our strong support for continued robust funding for clean water infrastructure in New York State. To provide clean and affordable drinking water, protect public health, and drive economic development, it is imperative that previously appropriated Clean Water Infrastructure Act (CWIA) funding be allocated to agencies and communities expeditiously, and that New York continues to make an annual investment of at least \$1 billion in the CWIA through the SFY 2022-23 budget.

New York's drinking water and wastewater infrastructure needs are significant, with an estimated \$80 billion in upgrades needed over the next 20 years. Aging drinking water and sewage systems put our local economies, environment, and health at risk. Municipalities across the state are struggling to provide residents with safe and affordable drinking water—this should be an unacceptable circumstance in the year 2021.

In addition to longstanding challenges such as lead service lines that must be replaced and source water that must be protected, many communities face new challenges as they grapple with emerging contaminants in drinking water, such as PFOA, PFOS, and 1,4-dioxane. Residents are also witnessing the degradation of local water bodies through sewage overflows, harmful algal blooms, hypoxia, and other water quality impairments. As we continue to recover from the pandemic, we must work to ensure that our health, environment, and economy are not threatened by unsafe drinking water, increased pollution, failing pipes, and beach closures.

Get Existing Funding Out to Communities in Need

New York has invested a historic \$4 billion in the CWIA since its creation in 2017. The CWIA funds numerous programs, including the Water Infrastructure Improvement Act (WIIA), which helps local governments afford critically needed projects including water main repairs, sewer pipe replacements, and treatment plant upgrades. **WIIA has been extremely popular and successful, distributing over 600 grants to communities in every county outside of New York City.** Increased funding has also created jobs and paved the way for economic development. In 2019 alone, New York's water infrastructure grants created over 20,000 jobs that pay prevailing wage.

However, due to the pandemic, progress came to a standstill in 2020, with no new grant awards for local governments. It is our understanding that no new grants have yet been awarded in 2021 either; the only action taken by the previous administration this spring and summer was to

announce final approval to previously-awarded grants. The result is that as much as \$2 billion intended to be awarded through the CWIA in 2020 and 2021 has not been put to use. It is extremely concerning that New York has fallen so woefully behind in distributing financial assistance. It is critical that these funds be made available to state agencies and dispersed to communities in order to move forward with much-needed drinking water and wastewater infrastructure projects.

We respectfully request that the approximately \$2 billion of Clean Water Infrastructure Act funding be made available to state agencies and awarded to communities across the state before the end of 2021. These clean water grants will bolster New York's recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, create thousands of good-paying jobs, protect public health, and help ensure affordable drinking water for all New Yorkers.

New CWIA investments needed in SFY 2022-23

In the SFY 2017-18 budget, New York made history with passage of the CWIA, which provided \$2.5 billion dollars for clean water infrastructure projects over five years. Coupled with an additional annual appropriation of \$500 million, which began in 2019 (through a promise of an additional \$2.5 billion over five years from the previous administration), the state has been appropriating approximately \$1 billion annually over the past few years. However, the SFY 2021-22 budget represented the last year of the initial five-year CWIA investment, meaning that there is no guarantee of additional CWIA funding in SFY 2022-23.

Continued state investments in the CWIA, coupled with a likely influx of new federal dollars for clean water infrastructure, provides New York State with a once-in-a-generation opportunity to tackle longstanding and emerging threats to clean water in our state. ***We respectfully urge you to provide at least \$1 billion for the CWIA in your SFY 2022-23 executive budget proposal.***

Ensuring that all previously appropriated CWIA go out to agencies and communities this year, along with an additional \$1 billion for the CWIA in the SFY 2022-23 budget, will go a long way toward achieving our shared goal of clean and affordable water for all New Yorkers.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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cc: Karen Keogh, Secretary to the Governor, Office of the Governor
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