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Jonathan Altenberg
Executive Director

P.O. Box 1332
New Lenox, IL 60451
312.201.4518
www.glslcities.org

September 9, 2021

Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Honorable Richard J. Durbin
Majority Whip
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Honorable John Thune
Minority Whip
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, Majority Whip Durbin and Minority Whip Thune:

We are writing on behalf of nearly 135 mayors in the Great Lakes region to convey our strong support for the budget reconciliation legislation in the House Natural Resources Committee that provides \$9.5 billion for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to help coastal communities restore habitat, adapt to climate change, and protect infrastructure from rising water levels, severe storms, and flooding. This responds to urgent needs facing shoreline communities in the eight-state Great Lakes region and we urge you to retain this funding as the budget reconciliation package moves forward.

Water levels in the five Great Lakes reached historic highs in recent years, causing severe shoreline erosion and flooding. More frequent severe storms have exacerbated these impacts, threatening municipal infrastructure, homes and businesses in shoreline areas. For example, Detroit has experienced four, 100-year storms since 2014, including two this summer that left six inches of rain in a single day, overwhelming water systems and flooding 30,000 homes. Cities across our region are experiencing similar impacts.

In response, Great Lakes cities are confronting an overwhelming need to invest in projects that strengthen climate resilience in vulnerable shoreline areas. A recent survey we conducted shows that **Great Lakes and St. Lawrence municipalities have spent more than \$800 million on coastal protection efforts over the past two years, and expect to spend more than \$2 billion over the next five years.** In addition, the Coastal States Organization has identified more than \$6 billion in future coastal infrastructure projects and estimates that the total need among the 35 coastal states exceeds \$10 billion. This is consistent with the request from the bipartisan House Oceans Caucus for a \$10 billion investment in coastal restoration and resilience projects.

In brief, the funding in the Natural Resources Committee's reconciliation bill addresses an urgent and well documented need. In addition to safeguarding shoreline communities, these investments will save money by minimizing impacts in the future, with every \$1 invested in resilience and hazard mitigation projected to save \$6 in avoided costs.

The eight Great Lakes states have more than 4,500 miles of shoreline, nearly as much as all the states bordering the Atlantic Ocean, Gulf of Mexico, and west coast combined. The lakes hold more than 90% of our nation's supply of fresh surface water and 30 million people live in the U.S. Great Lakes watershed. Over the past decade restoring the Great Lakes has enjoyed broad support among citizens and local leaders and has been a consistent and bipartisan priority for our delegation in Congress. Future investments in coastal resilience will protect the progress we have made and further safeguard the environmental and economic health of our communities.

Great Lakes cities have been hit hard by recent events and our residents appreciate your support for investments that will accelerate our economic recovery, rebuild our water infrastructure, and protect our coastal areas. If you have questions or would like additional information, please contact Jon Altenberg (847-347-6947, jon.altenberg@glslcities.org), the executive director of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, which coordinates the voices of Great Lakes mayors.

Sincerely,



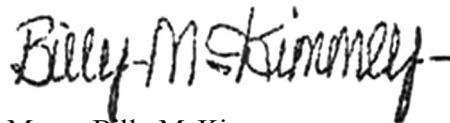
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Secretary, Great Lakes and St. Lawrence
Cities Initiative



Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot
Chicago, Illinois
Board of Directors, Great Lakes and St. Lawrence
Cities Initiative



Mayor Mike Duggan
Detroit, Michigan
Board of Directors, Great Lakes and St. Lawrence
Cities Initiative

CC: Senate Great Lakes Delegation