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June 8, 2026

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The Honorable Brett Guthrie
Chair, Committee on Energy
and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.
Ranking Member, Committee on
Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Chair Guthrie and Ranking Member Pallone:

On behalf of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Cities Initiative, we write to express our strong opposition to the **reduced authorized spending level for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Brownfields Program included in the Brownfield Revitalization for a Better Tomorrow Act (H.R. 8739)** that was passed by the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Environment on May 14, 2026.

EPA estimates there are more than 450,000 remaining brownfield sites across the country, nearly 32 percent of which are located in the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River Region. In Duluth and Racine, we are proud of our history of manufacturing, but we cannot meet the current demand for economic growth without first addressing the legacy pollutants of the past.

Since 2002, the EPA Brownfields Program has helped assess over 42,000 properties and make over 180,000 acres of prime real estate ready for anticipated use. But brownfields are not just an environmental problem to solve – they are an economic opportunity to leverage. EPA estimates that every one dollar invested in the Brownfields Program results in an average of 20 dollars in economic return, helping attract new businesses and build local economies.

While we support efforts to reauthorize this vital program, it is crucial that funding levels remain consistent with need. Earlier drafts of H.R. 8739 included an authorized spending level of \$250 million annually for the Brownfields Program, but the most recent version of the bill drastically cuts this amount to \$123.5 million annually. Not only is this amount significantly below the previous authorized spending level of \$200 million, it is insufficient to meet demand, meaning valuable properties may remain vacant or underutilized for years to come.

In September 2025, the Cities Initiative launched our new *Economic Transformation Action Plan* with the goal of creating a new Fresh Coast Economic Corridor that both leverages and protects our shared freshwater resources. As part of this plan, the Cities Initiative is establishing a new Vacant to Vibrant technical assistance program for brownfield redevelopment. A decrease in available funding will not only hinder this effort in the Great Lakes but prevent communities nationwide from realizing their full economic potential as well.

That is why we respectfully request that the **authorized spending amount in H.R. 8739 be increased to \$250 million per fiscal year**, as proposed by the House Energy and Commerce Committee in previous drafts of the bill.

Thank you for your consideration,

Roger J. Reinert
Mayor of Duluth, MN

Cory Mason
Mayor of Racine, WI