

March 17, 2020

Honorable Andrew Cuomo
Governor
Executive Chamber
Capitol
Albany, NY 12234

Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Temporary President and Majority Leader
State Senate
LOB, Room 907
Albany, NY 12247

Honorable Carl Heastie
Speaker
State Assembly
LOB, Room 932
Albany, NY 12248

Honorable John Flanagan
Minority Leader
State Senate
LOB, Room 909
Albany, NY 12247

Honorable William Barclay
Minority Leader
State Assembly
LOB, Room 933
Albany, NY 12248

Re: \$1 Billion for the Clean Water Infrastructure Act in the SFY2020-21 Budget

Dear Messrs. Cuomo, Heastie, Flanagan, Barclay and Ms. Stewart-Cousins:

We, the undersigned organizations, write to urge you to include at least \$1 billion towards the Clean Water Infrastructure Act in the SFY2020-21 budget. The Clean Water Infrastructure Act (CWIA), which funds the critical repairs and maintenance needed for the infrastructure responsible for keeping New York's drinking water and waterways clean, has been incredibly successful, but the available funding still falls short of the state's extensive needs.

We were happy to see the inclusion of the promised \$500 million installment as part of the \$2.5 billion new commitment to the Clean Water Infrastructure Act in the Executive budget. However, it is critical that this funding is built upon to meet outstanding water infrastructure needs and emerging threats to water quality.

Created by the Governor and the Legislature in SFY2017-18 with an initial \$2.5 billion to be spent over five years, the CWIA funds numerous clean water programs, such as the Water Infrastructure Improvement Act grant program (WIIA), the Lead Service Line Replacement grant program, green infrastructure, septic system replacement, source water protection, addressing emerging contaminants such as PFOA, PFOS, and 1,4-dioxane, and more.

It has been estimated that over the next twenty years, New York will need to invest \$80 billion in both drinking and wastewater infrastructure alone. According to a recent analysis of the WIIA conducted by Environmental Advocates of New York, WIIA funded projects in 57 of New York's 62 counties between 2015 and 2018, and each year, *only half of shovel-ready projects with complete applications received a grant award.*

Additionally, the \$80 billion water infrastructure estimate does not include what will be needed to properly fund other programs within the CWIA. For example, the Department of Health estimates that treatment systems for 1,4-dioxane could cost as much as \$3.5 million per system.

Furthermore, these funds are also critical to maintain and improve the affordability of water and sewer service for ratepayers across the state who would otherwise bear the full costs of these necessary upgrades—or would experience diminished access to or quality of service due to their inability to pay.

In the face of threats from the climate crisis, it is more important than ever that New York make bold investments in water infrastructure. With New York already suffering from harmful algal blooms, chemical contamination, frequent sewage overflows and watermain breaks, and stress from climate change, continued leadership on funding is urgent.

The Clean Water Infrastructure Act has been a historic program – we strongly support increased funding by at least \$500 million in SFY2020-21, for a total investment of \$1 billion. Thank you for your consideration of our comments, and we look forward to partnering with you.

Sincerely,

Nate Drag
Water Project Manager
Alliance for the Great Lakes

Maureen Cunningham
Senior Director for Clean Water
Environmental Advocates of New York

Eric Weltman
Senior Organizer
Food and Water Watch

Judith Enck
Former EPA Regional Administrator

Elizabeth Moran
Environmental Policy Director
NYPIRG

Tracy Brown
Director
Save the Sound

CC: Honorable Steven Englebright, Chair, Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee
Honorable Todd Kaminsky, Chair, Senate Environmental Conservation Committee