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**Grace Meng**

**Congress of the United States**

**Sixth District, New York**

Chair Napolitano, Ranking Member Rouzer, and distinguished Members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment, thank you for allowing me to testify today.

I am honored to share with you all my priorities as the Committee considers reauthorization of the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2022, that will support the safety and wellbeing of my constituents in Queens, New York.

Last September, the remnants of Hurricane Ida caused record rainfall in New York City; indeed the National Weather Service for the first time issued a flash flood emergency for the City. The downpour caused massive flooding where the streets became rivers, and waterfalls poured down into the subway system. Queens was hit particularly hard, and many of my constituents suffered devastating losses; many were left without a home, a car, or their possessions.

Tragically, 16 New Yorkers lost their lives in the storm, including 13 individuals who succumbed to the catastrophic flooding; of those 16 deaths, 6 were my constituents. Many of the storm's victims died in their own homes; they lived in basements apartments that flooded too quickly for them to escape. This catastrophic flooding happened because New York City's sewer and water management systems were not built to handle the volume of rainfall from the storm.

According to City officials, the water management system in New York City, which was built over a century ago, can only handle rainfall that is less than 2 inches an hour. At its peak, Ida's rainfall was over 3 inches per hour in parts of the City, far too fast and heavy for the existing infrastructure to handle. New York City was unprepared for Ida, and remains unprepared for another storm of its magnitude. And Hurricane Ida is not an isolated incident. Just two weeks before Ida, Tropical Storm Henri also broke the existing record for rainfall in an hour in New York City. In fact, four of the 20 heaviest downpours in New York happened last year.

As climate change continues to cause more and more severe weather-related storms and natural disasters, we are going to see more often events like Ida. We need to ensure that our communities are resilient to meet the challenges ahead. And New York City needs help to prevent Hurricane Ida's tragedies from repeating themselves. The four Environmental Infrastructure projects that I bring before the Committee's consideration will bring invaluable help for New York City to make its sewer and water management systems more resilient to heavy rainfall, and will lower the risk of flooding and by extension, death.

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These projects will install new water mains and rehabilitate or replace sewer lines to improve stormwater management. They will improve drinking water distribution, reduce sewer backups, and relieve flooding. Investing in New York City's water and sewer system is crucial to saving the lives and livelihoods of my constituents as we continue to encounter the threat from climate change and extreme weather.

Thank you again for your time and consideration of these matters. I ask that the Chair and Ranking Member consider my projects for inclusion in this year's WRDA reauthorization to protect the people of Queens.