



## GREAT LAKES METRO CHAMBERS COALITION

July 14, 2020

The Honorable Peter DeFazio  
Chairman  
House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, and Members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee:

The Great Lakes Metro Chambers Coalition—a collective of chambers of commerce across the Great Lakes region—writes to urge your support for the H.R. 7575, the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2020. This bipartisan legislation is essential to our region, which comprises a \$6 trillion economy that is responsible for more than 50 percent of the goods transported across the northern border. We ask that as legislators continue to think about long-term strategies for our country's economic recovery, passage of critical water infrastructure, resiliency, and innovation legislation remains a top priority.

This bill plays an important role in directing the Army Corps of Engineers to expand the Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study. The assessment will determine water resources needs for the Great Lakes System and make recommendations for potential water resources development projects to respond to changing hydrologic and climatic conditions in the region. The study was developed to safeguard against threats like flooding and erosion and is vital to protecting the Great Lakes' 5,200-mile coastline and 4.2 million people that live within two miles of it. It would serve as a valuable investment in Great Lakes infrastructure, resulting in a blueprint that identifies vulnerable areas and recommends measures to increase resiliency and protect our coastline.

As part of our 2020 Policy Agenda, which calls for prioritized investments for the Great Lakes in the WRDA, we also urge the reauthorization of the Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund (CWSF) at increased levels for the first time in more than 30 years. State revolving loan funds act as "infrastructure banks" by providing low-interest loans for drinking water infrastructure projects. These funds are critical for our region, as water crises in places like Flint, Michigan, and Toledo, Ohio, prove that Great Lakes Basin water supplies are vulnerable. Further, previous iterations of WRDA authorized major projects that spurred investment across the Great Lakes. The Upper Ohio Navigation project, for example, addressed significant lock and capacity issues and provided a pathway to safe, reliable, and efficient navigation on the Ohio River in the Pittsburgh region.

Beyond these longstanding needs, investing in water infrastructure will create jobs and strengthen the water innovation economy. For example, investments in water infrastructure finance and innovation, which fund clean water and drinking





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water projects, created over 25,000 jobs in 2019. At a time when soaring numbers of Great Lakes residents have lost their jobs due to COVID-19 repercussions, these investments are pivotal.

We greatly appreciate the work of Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, Water Resources & Environment Subcommittee Chairwoman Napolitano, and Ranking Member Westerman in introducing H.R. 7575. The current federal dialogue around water infrastructure as a means for economic recovery is promising, particularly for the Great Lakes region.

The GLMCC—and the businesses and communities that it represents—understands that investing in our region's water sources can catalyze innovation, job creation, and economic growth. We urge our federal partners to support these investments and help position our region for the future.

Sincerely,

Dottie Gallagher  
President & CEO  
Buffalo Niagara Partnership

Sandy K. Baruah  
President and CEO  
Detroit Regional Chamber

Joe Roman  
President & CEO  
Greater Cleveland Partnership

Matt Smith  
President  
Greater Pittsburgh Chamber of Commerce – an affiliate  
of the Allegheny Conference

CC: House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Ranking Member Sam Graves  
Members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee

