

February 26, 2019

Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins, Temporary President and Majority Leader
New York State Senate
Legislative Office Building, Room 907
Albany, NY 12247

Honorable Carl Heastie, Speaker
New York State Assembly
Legislative Office Building, Room 932
Albany, NY 12248

Re: Clean Water Infrastructure Act Funding in the SFY2019-20 Budget

Dear Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins and Speaker Carl Heastie:

The undersigned organizations write to urge that you include a new appropriation of at least \$2.5 billion for the Clean Water Infrastructure Act (CWIA) in the SFY2019-20 budget. This critical funding source, which supports the infrastructure responsible for bringing clean drinking water to our homes and keeping waterways clean, has been incredibly successful, but needs still dwarf available funding.

Few issues are as important to our health, economy, and environment, as safe, reliable clean water. In the 21st century, ensuring safe drinking and recreational waters means having adequate infrastructure. But much of New York's water infrastructure has aged well beyond its useful lifespan, leading to billions of gallons of sewage overflows and thousands of water main breaks annually. This issue has only been compounded by climate change and unregulated chemicals contaminating drinking water supplies.

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, and more.

We were excited by the Governor's State of the State proposal to increase this program by an additional \$2.5 billion. However, unlike the first \$2.5 billion appropriation, the full funding is not included in the Capital Appropriations budget legislation. Rather, only the first \$500 million is appropriated.¹ **The appropriations language should be amended to reflect, at least, the full \$2.5 billion, with supporting language to distribute the funds among the various programs.** This will ensure that funding is available over the promised five-year period.

New York's water infrastructure funding is making a difference

In recent years, leadership from the Governor and the Legislature has begun to reverse decades of inadequate investment. Resources first made available in the SFY2015-16 budget and the creation of the CWIA has made an enormous difference for communities that may not have otherwise had the means to repair and replace their degrading water infrastructure.

¹ SFY19-20 Capital Projects Appropriations legislation, p. 109, line 32—p. 110, line 25.

According to a recent analysis of the WIIA, every county that applied for funding has been awarded at least once, each year applications increased by 60%, and each year the number of grants being awarded has increased. Four times the number of projects were awarded funding in 2017 as compared to 2015.²

In addition to WIIA, when the other programs within the CWIA are taken into account, **this fund has benefited every county in New York State.**

Not only have these investments resulted in more water infrastructure repairs and upgrades, they have also led to the creation of thousands of jobs across the state. According to press releases from the Governor's office, 17,300 jobs will be created as a result of the 2018 water infrastructure grants alone.

The United States Department of Commerce has estimated that each job created in the local water and wastewater industry creates 3.68 jobs in the national economy, and each public dollar spent yields \$2.62 in economic output in other industries³. These benefits are unlocked by the CWIA, which has effectively leveraged other sources of funding to put shovels in the ground.

Needs exceed available funding

It has been estimated that over the next twenty years, New York will need to invest approximately \$80 billion to make needed updates, repairs, and replacements for wastewater and drinking water infrastructure.⁴ These estimates are now over ten-years old and have likely since grown.⁵

Moreover, that figure does not include other water needs that are encompassed in the Clean Water Infrastructure Act, like funding to preserve land around source water, septic system replacement, and water filtration systems. For example, \$185 million was recently put aside to assist communities with addressing emerging contaminants, such as PFOA, PFOS, and 1,4-dioxane.⁶ According to the Department of Health (DOH), costs for treating these chemicals alone could cost as much as \$1.5 billion for PFOA and PFOS, and \$1.1 billion for 1,4-dioxane.⁷

The WIIA, which receives \$1 billion out of the Clean Water Infrastructure Act, has been oversubscribed since its initial creation. According to an analysis of the first three years of WIIA, only half of the eligible projects that applied for grant funding were awarded – 50/50 chances of funding are not the odds New Yorkers need for water infrastructure funding. Out of the 22,000 miles of sewer pipes statewide, nearly a third are beyond their projected 60-year lifespans, and a quarter of over 600 sewage treatment plants are beyond their projected useful life of 30 years.⁸

Additionally, investment in water infrastructure is a necessary component of climate resiliency. Based on modeling, temperatures in New York will be up 3 degrees and precipitation will increase by 8% compared to the 1970-2000 period by the 2020s. Current levels of precipitation and snow melt and extreme temperature fluctuations are causing water main and sewer line breaks and massive sewage overflows – this will only grow worse without proper investment.

² Hayes, Robert, "Untapped Potential: Water Infrastructure Spending in New York," Environmental Advocates of New York, February 2019,

http://eany.org/sites/default/files/documents/untapped_potential_water_infrastructure_spending_in_new_york_eany_2-7-19.pdf

³ U.S Conference of Mayors, "LOCAL GOVERNMENT INVESTMENT IN MUNICIPAL WATER AND SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE: Adding Value to the National Economy," August 14, 2008, <https://www.cadmusgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Krop-et-al-2008-LocalGovt-InvtInMunicipalWaterandSewerInfrastructure.pdf>

⁴ Hamilton, Matthew, "New York's water infrastructure needs estimated at \$80B over 20 years," Times Union, February 13, 2017, <https://www.timesunion.com/local/article/New-York-s-water-infrastructure-needs-estimated-10930256.php>

⁵ DEC Commissioner Joseph Martens, 2-14-2015: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDNm9wFfUc>

⁶ EFC, Grants for Emerging Contaminants in Drinking Water, <https://www.efc.ny.gov/EmergingContaminants>.

⁷ DOH, PowerPoint slides from December 2018 Drinking Water Quality Council meeting.

⁸ Nearing, Brian, "Needs outweigh cash in State's infrastructure fund," Times Union, February 7, 2019, <https://www.timesunion.com/7day-state/article/Needs-outweigh-cash-in-state-s-infrastructure-fund-13597476.php>.

These funds are also critical to maintain and improve the affordability of water and sewer service for rate payers 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.

Continued leadership is needed

In the face of threats from the federal government, it is more important than ever that New York make bold investments in water infrastructure. With rollbacks to essential environmental protections, like the Clean Water Act, and New York 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 the promised \$2.5 billion in SFY2019-20. Thank you for your consideration of our comments, and we look forward to partnering with you.

Sincerely,

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**United Association: Union of
Plumbers, fitters, welders**

cc: Honorable Andrew Cuomo, Governor
Honorable John Flanagan, Minority Leader
Honorable Brian Kolb, Minority Leader
Honorable Todd Kaminsky, Chair, Senate Environmental Conservation Committee
Honorable Steven Englebright, Chair, Assembly Environmental Conservation Committee

