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Assemblymember 109<sup>th</sup> District

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Legislative Women's Caucus  
Task Force on Women's Issues

February 9, 2022

Hon. Carl E. Heastie Speaker  
NYS Assembly LOB 932  
Albany, NY 12248

**RE: Hudson River Estuary Management (HERF) Funding**

Dear Speaker Heastie:

We write to respectfully request a \$2-million increase to the Hudson River Estuary Management line item in the Environmental Protection Fund. Despite serving New York's most populous region and supporting its surging recreation and tourism economy, the annual investment in the HREP has increased by just \$500,000 (to \$6.5 million) since its inception in 1996. This influential and innovative program engages and motivates local stakeholders to develop and achieve goals to conserve the estuary and improve public access to it, driving habitat restoration, environmental education, climate resilience planning, water quality improvements and scientific research.

The HREP has created beloved projects like Trees for Tribes and the Day in the Life of the Hudson, which has introduced thousands of schoolchildren to the amazing American eel. It funds numerous high-profile and high-impact projects, including the recent removal of dams and culvert rightsizing to restore healthy, free-flowing rivers and reduce localized flooding. Engineering studies supported by the HREP catalyzed the landmark six-community agreement to reduce combined sewer overflows in the Capital District and supported countless other communities in gaining access to state and federal funding.

This unique regional partnership helps people of all ages and abilities protect and enjoy the Hudson River, from the federal dam at Troy to the Verrazano Narrows in New York City. In 2021 alone, it supported projects at 165 locations, providing more than 39 Estuary Grants and 24 curriculum models for classroom watershed education — with 77% of the former and 43% of the latter benefiting environmental justice communities. This funding also helped bring in more than \$10 million in grants and funds from other sources.

A \$2 million increase in funding for the HREP will enable its staff and partners to remain a leader in confronting the estuary's legacy and emerging environmental challenges, including legacy contaminants, the increased frequency of 100- and 500-year storm events, sewage overflows, compromised drinking water sources and harmful algal blooms. It is the premier tool to help the state adapt to climate change through flood mitigation, wetland restoration projects, and water quality monitoring studies that help local communities maintain clean and safe drinking water.

For all of these reasons, we the undersigned Assemblymembers respectfully request that you grow the funding for the Hudson River Estuary Program to at least \$8.5 million on an annual basis to address the current demand for a safe and accessible Hudson River and Valley.

Sincerely,



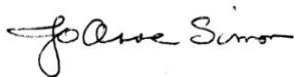
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Linda Rosenthal  
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Jonathan Jacobson  
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Emily Gallagher  
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CC: Assemblymember Helene Weinstein, Chair Assembly Ways & Means Committee

Blake Washington