



September 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019

The Honorable «FName» «LName»  
«Office»  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator «LName»:

On behalf of the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition and our more than 160 members, thank you for supporting S. 2295, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act of 2019. The Great Lakes provide drinking water for over 30 million Americans and the reauthorization of the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative is an important step in protecting the waters that define our region's way of life and are at the heart of a binational economy that is the 3rd largest in the world. Together with your colleagues, you're ensuring that the bipartisan support and broad benefits of the GLRI are clear to all and worth expanding.

As you know, this bill reauthorizes the successful Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and helps meet the on-the-ground needs of communities by increasing the annual authorization to \$475 million per year over five years. Over the past decade the GLRI has been improving lives across Great Lakes communities after decades of environmental damage threatened public health, the regional economy, and its drinking water. The GLRI has allowed the 8-state region to undertake one of the world's largest freshwater ecosystem restoration projects. Since its inception, the initiative has resulted in economic returns of more than 3 to 1 across the region and made tremendous progress:

- Tripling the delisting of areas with extreme degradation (AOCs)
- Increasing the remediation of environmental and public health impairments nearly seven-fold
- Doubling farmland acres under nutrient conservation
- Reducing phosphorus runoff and the threat of harmful algal blooms
- Controlling and stopping invasive species
- Restoring habitat connectivity to over 5,250 river miles

However, there is still much work to be done. Two-thirds of impairments remain untreated across 19 AOCs, placing the health of communities at risk. Drinking water and coastal economies remain under threat from harmful algal blooms that have shut down entire water systems; as was seen in Toledo, Ohio in 2014. Invasive species, like Asian Carp, are knocking at the door of the lakes and threaten a \$7 billion fishery. Moreover, emerging contaminants and a changing climate continue to exacerbate the challenges we face, many of which disproportionately impact people that have historically borne the brunt of environmental injustice. This underscores the urgency for the GLRI to address these growing threats and we look forward to working with you to find ways to ensure restoration investments lead to equitable outcomes for everyone in the region.

The GLRI has been an environmental and economic success, but much work remains. The region stands ready to continue this important federal partnership and ensure all benefit from and enjoy these investments in restoration and protection. We thank you for your support! Please do not hesitate to contact Chad Lord, our coalition's policy director, if you have any questions. He can be reached at (202) 454-3385 or [clord@npca.org](mailto:clord@npca.org). We look forward to working with you as the bill moves forward.

Sincerely,

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