Dear Chair Pingree and Ranking Member Joyce:

We write to respectfully request that the Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies provide at least $400 million for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) in its Fiscal Year 2023 appropriations bill.

The Great Lakes are a true natural treasure and critical resource we must continue to prioritize and protect. These waters—Lake Huron, Lake Ontario, Lake Michigan, Lake Erie, and Lake Superior—comprise the largest surface freshwater system in the world, holding nearly 21 percent of the world’s freshwater supply and 90 percent of the United States’ freshwater supply. The Lakes are an economic driver that supports jobs, commerce, agriculture, transportation, and tourism for millions of people across the country. A 2018 report showed that every GLRI dollar spent through 2016 in cleaning up toxic hot spots in Areas of Concern (AOC), controlling invasive species, restoring wildlife habitat, protecting wetlands, and reducing harmful algae will produce more than $3 in additional economic activity through 2036. In addition to directly creating or supporting, on average, more than 5,000 jobs per year.

In addition to measurable economic results, the GLRI is producing significant environmental benefits for our region. Five AOCs have been delisted under the GLRI and all cleanup actions for ten more are complete. The number of beneficial use impairments, which are benchmarks for environmental harm in AOCs, removed has increased tenfold under the GLRI. Over 5,400 river miles have been cleared of dams and other barriers reconnecting fish to important habitats. More than 274 million gallons of untreated runoff and more than 1.5 million pounds of phosphorus, a significant contributor to harmful algal blooms in the Great Lakes, have been mitigated and captured through GLRI implemented projects in priority watersheds.

Even with the results from over 6,000 projects, there is still much work to do. Fifteen AOCs are still contaminated with toxic sediment, stunting the development and threatening the health of too many Great Lakes communities. Runoff from sources including farm fields, septic systems, and other sources continue to pollute our waters causing increasingly larger toxic algae outbreaks each year that threatens water systems, public health, and economic vitality. Habitat loss and aquatic invasive species continue to damage our region’s outdoor way of life.

Support for the Great Lakes and GLRI has long seen strong bipartisan support in Congress. Halting or reducing this commitment would reverse years of progress, dramatically reducing the GLRI’s impact, and jeopardize the environmental and economic health of the region for generations to come.

To that end, we urge you to continue this vital investment in the economic and environmental health of the Great Lakes by including at least $400 million for the GLRI in the Fiscal Year 2023 Interior and Environment appropriations bill.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

Mike Gallagher
Member of Congress

Daniel T. Kildee
Member of Congress

Mike Kelly
Member of Congress

John Katko
Member of Congress

Gwen S. Moore
Member of Congress

Bill Huizenga
Member of Congress

Brian Higgins
Member of Congress
Joseph D. Morelle  
Member of Congress

Tim Ryan  
Member of Congress

Sean Casten  
Member of Congress

Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress

Darin LaHood  
Member of Congress

Jackie Walorski  
Member of Congress

Paul D. Tonko  
Member of Congress

Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress

Josh Gottheimer  
Member of Congress

Frank J. Mrvan  
Member of Congress