

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 23, 2017

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chair
Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall
Vice Chair
Subcommittee on the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Udall:

As the Subcommittee develops spending priorities for Fiscal Year 2018 (FY18), we strongly urge you to support full and robust funding for the Assistance for Small and Disadvantaged Communities grants in Section 2104, the Reducing Lead in Drinking Water Grants in Section 2105, and the Lead Testing in School and Child Care Program Drinking Water Grants in Section 2107 in Public Law No: 114-322 at the full authorized amounts.

Americans have a right to expect that water coming from their taps is safe to drink. We can no longer delay needed upgrades to our infrastructure, strengthening drinking water protections and removing lead and other contaminants from our public water supplies.

There are nearly 2,000 water systems—at least one in every state in the country—that have elevated levels of lead in their drinking water. The Section 2105 grants go directly toward replacement of lead service lines, testing, planning, and corrosion control in water systems throughout the country.

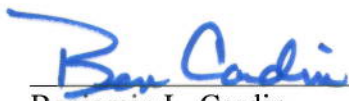
Small and disadvantaged communities have a particularly difficult time removing contaminants from their drinking water systems due to funding constraints. In fact, more than 18,000 drinking water systems serving almost 77 million people across the country were in violation of the Safe Drinking Water Act just in 2015 alone. Smaller systems, like those serving rural areas, had much higher rates of violations than larger systems. The Section 2104 grants would allow the communities with the least resources to ensure that their drinking water is safe.

Finally, there have been many reports in recent years of lead found in the drinking water of schools across the country. Unfortunately, testing can be expensive for already cash-strapped schools. Section 2107 Grants were created help defray those costs and keep the limited funding our schools receive focused on education.

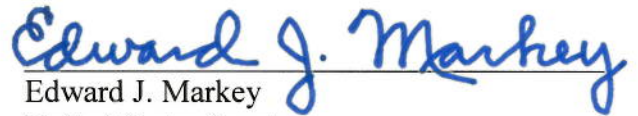
These grant programs passed the Senate on an overwhelming vote of 95-3, in large part because we in the Senate know that clean water is one of the most basic foundations of our daily lives – we ignore its safe storage and delivery at our own peril. The underfunding of our vital water and wastewater infrastructure, and the safety of our families and children, are issues we simply cannot continue ignore. Pipes may be out of sight, but they cannot be out of mind. We urgently need to minimize the risks to our communities and our children. Urban, rural and suburban neighborhoods – in every community in America – all rely on safe, clean water.

We respectfully urge you to fully fund these grant programs and protect our communities.

Sincerely,



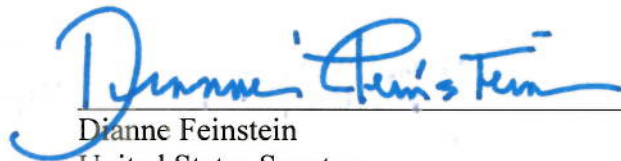
Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



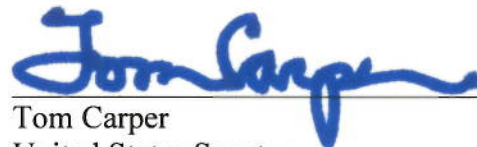
James M. Inhofe
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



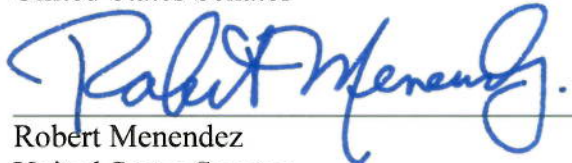
Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Tom Carper
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
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Bernard Sanders
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Robert P. Casey
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United States Senator



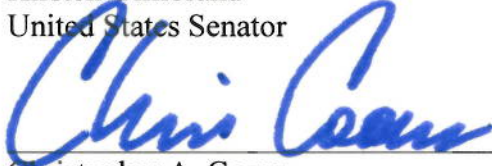
Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



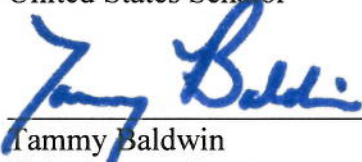
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



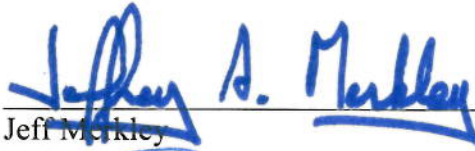
Dan Sullivan
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez-Masto
United States Senator



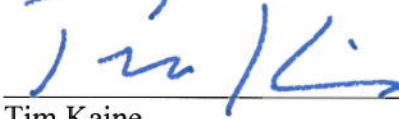
Jeff Merkley
United States Senator



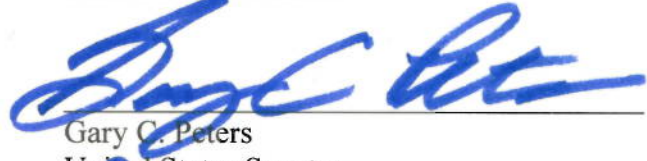
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United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
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Gary C. Peters
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Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator