

December 12, 2019

The Honorable Peter DeFazio
Chairman
Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Sam Graves
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman DeFazio and Ranking Member Graves:

We are writing to urge the committee to support all legislative and administrative actions needed to address the growing water and wastewater challenges along the U.S.-Mexico border. Communities and companies on both sides of the border face significant risks to public health, quality of life, and economic growth — as hundreds of millions of gallons of sewerage go untreated.

To address this pressing issue, we advocate for the following policy and practical solutions:

- Pass H.R. 132, the North American Development Bank Improvement Act of 2019, to prioritize funding for water, wastewater, and solid waste sustainable infrastructure projects.
- Pass H.R. 4039, the Border Water Infrastructure Improvement Act, to increase authorization to \$150 million per year for the next five years and fund essential drinking water and wastewater projects that protect both the community's public health and the environment.
- Establish within the NAD Bank the U.S.-Mexico Border Water and Public Health Trust Fund, in which federal agencies can deposit unallocated funding to design, implement, and finance environmental infrastructure projects related to water and wastewater treatment, water conservation, and municipal solid waste along the U.S.-Mexico border.
- Expand EPA's Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) authority to allow investments in Mexican water and wastewater infrastructure in border communities.
- Encourage the State Department and associated consulates and the U.S. Trade and Development Agency to support technical exchanges and reverse trade missions among Mexican and U.S. water professionals to

share best practices and experiences and promote the export of U.S. water technologies and solutions.

The NAD Bank has been vitally important to improving basic services in the border region by financing numerous water, wastewater, solid waste, and street paving projects, among others. Throughout its history, the NAD Bank has provided over \$2.76 billion in loans and grants to support infrastructure projects in the border region and leveraged its initial paid-in capital of \$405 million into investments totaling \$8.2 billion in sustainable infrastructure. This has directly benefited more than 12 million residents of the region.

Similarly, the Border Water Infrastructure Program (BWIP) protects both the community's public health and the environment by funding essential drinking water and wastewater projects that are financially unfeasible for the area. Transboundary waters usage requires environmental, political, and technical alternatives to protect citizens from the border region from diseases related to contaminated water consumption and untreated sewage. Transboundary water migration and lack of clean drinking water can result in significant public health and environmental challenges on both sides of the border. It is not unusual for residents, visitors, and personnel from the U.S. Border Patrol to encounter harmful and polluted waste, compromising their health and safety and jeopardizing our border security, regional tourism, and our communities.

The Chamber, working with the state and local chambers listed below, strongly urges your support for legislation and other activities that provide critical funding and technical assistance for implementing infrastructure projects that address water pollution and wastewater challenges. Concrete actions and funding are both long overdue.

Chuck Chaitovitz, the Chamber's Vice President for Environmental Affairs and Sustainability, will follow up with you and your team to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

- U.S. Chamber of Commerce
- Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry
- Brawley Chamber of Commerce
- CalChamber
- El Centro Chamber of Commerce
- El Paso Chamber of Commerce

- Greater Phoenix Chamber of Commerce
- New Mexico Chamber of Commerce
- Nogales-Santa Cruz County Chamber of Commerce
- Otay Mesa Chamber
- Rio Grande Valley Partnership
- San Diego Regional Chamber
- San Ysidro Chamber of Commerce
- Texas Association of Business
- Tucson Chamber of Commerce
- Yuma County Chamber of Commerce

cc: Members of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Members of the Committee on Financial Services