

U.S. Rep. Moore: Leads call for administration to provide full funding for programs to prevent combined sewer overflows in 2021 budget

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – On Friday, January 24, Congresswoman Gwen Moore led a bipartisan call for Andrew Wheeler, Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), to make a budget request for no less than \$500 million in funding for the EPA’s Sewer Overflow and Stormwater Reuse Municipal Grant Program for fiscal year 2021. The letter, which was co-led by Congresswoman Lori Trahan, was also signed by Representatives Eleanor Holmes Norton, Nanette Diaz Barragán, Grace F. Napolitano, Debbie Dingell, Joe Kennedy III, Tulsi Gabbard, Robin L. Kelly, Sean Casten, Chris Pappas, Alcee L. Hastings, David Trone, Kathy Castor, Mark Pocan, Sheila Jackson Lee, Nydia M. Velázquez, Brian Fitzpatrick, Tom Malinowski, Henry C. “Hank” Johnson, Jr., Marcia Fudge, Gregory Meeks, and Andy Levin. It highlights the urgent need that Milwaukee, other Great Lake communities, and cities across our nation have for resources to support their efforts to upgrade outmoded sewer infrastructure that is causing harmful pollution from combined sewer overflows (CSO).

Combined sewer systems are in use by approximately 800 communities across the nation, including Milwaukee. These systems are particularly common in the Northeast and Midwest, where they trigger harmful releases of raw sewage when precipitation exceeds manageable levels.

“Combined sewer overflows are one of the water challenges that cities and states

around the country are facing. We must invest in our water infrastructure and I am pleased to co-lead this letter with my colleagues asking the Administration to step up and devote the necessary resources to protect the public's health and water quality," **said Congresswoman Gwen Moore.**

"Communities across the United States - particularly in the Northeast and Midwest - are suffering from harmful sewage overflow and pollution as a result of outdated wastewater infrastructure. In my own community, the Merrimack River has long suffered from these overflows, which jeopardize the health and economic wellbeing of residents who depend on the river. That is why, since coming to Congress, I've worked with my colleagues on the Appropriations Committee to fund relevant grant-giving programs and have introduced my own *Stop Sewage Overflow Act* to significantly increase the amount of grant funding available to financially distressed communities. Clean water is a basic human right, and the EPA has a central role to play in helping to secure it," **said Congresswoman Lori Trahan.**

"Communities should not be forced to bear the brunt of badly broken budgets alone because of weather events and environmental concerns outside of their control. With increased funding from the EPA, municipalities across our Commonwealth and country can invest in their own neighborhoods and continue to lead our response to climate change," **said Congressman Joe Kennedy III.**

"It's crucial we take meaningful action to modernize and strengthen our aging water infrastructure," **Congresswoman Bustos said.** "The long-term health and well-being of our communities depends on the investments we make today, which is why we must set them up for future success by providing the necessary resources to take on this important issue."

"The Sewer Overflow and Stormwater Municipal Grants Program is vitally important to helping communities eliminate sewer overflows. This funding is extremely welcome, and well overdue - while federal combined sewer overflow requirements were passed in the 1990s, the authorized funding to help communities comply was never provided until this year (FY2020). This program will help rectify this hardship for communities. We thank Rep. Trahan and all the Congressional advocates working to champion this program," **said Adam Krantz, NACWA CEO.**

Earlier this year, Congresswoman Moore led her colleagues in urging House Appropriations to increase funding for this program in the FY 2020 funding bills. The House ultimately provided \$90 million for this program although the final funding

bill only included \$28 million. You can view a signed copy of the letter [HERE](#), and read the text of the letter below:

January 24, 2020

The Honorable Andrew Wheeler

Administrator

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

1200 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Administrator Wheeler:

We are writing to respectfully request that the EPA's budget request for FY 2021 include at least \$500 million for the Sewer Overflow and Stormwater Reuse Municipal Grant program ("Section 221"). This funding level will significantly improve American communities' ability to meet their wastewater infrastructure improvement needs, including the elimination of combined sewer overflows.

The *America's Water Infrastructure Act* (P.L. 115-270), which was signed by the President in October 2018, authorized the EPA's Section 221 grant program. The program is designed to provide cost-share grants to States and municipalities for infrastructure improvements that address combined sewer overflows, sanitary sewer overflows, and stormwater management.

According to the most recent EPA Clean Water Needs Survey, nearly \$50 billion is needed for combined sewer overflow correction. Combined sewer overflows occur when combined sewer systems, which serve hundreds of communities across the nation, release raw sewage into waterways. Such releases are commonly triggered by precipitation events that produce a volume of effluent exceeding the system's manageable levels. When such events occur, the combined sewer system is designed to discharge raw sewage and wastewater directly into a nearby body of water rather than allow plumbing to back-up in homes and businesses.

Although this problem impacts communities across our country, it has had a disproportionate impact on many disadvantaged communities. These areas are least able to afford the required improvements to wastewater infrastructure. While

we appreciate the low-interest loans that have been provided for wastewater infrastructure improvements through the Clean Water State Revolving Fund, our communities need grant assistance as well. Robust funding of the Section 221 grant program is the only way we will finally be able to prevent combined sewer overflows as well as sanitary sewer overflows.

Thank you for your consideration of our request, and we stand ready to work with you to ensure our public waterways are safe and clean.

Sincerely,

Cosigners: Lori Trahan (MA-03), Gwen Moore (WI-04), Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC), Nanette Diaz Barragán (CA-44), Grace F. Napolitano (CA-32), Debbie Dingell (MI-12), Joseph P. Kennedy, III (MA-04), Tulsi Gabbard (HI-02), Robin L. Kelly (IL-02), Sean Casten (IL-06), Chris Pappas (NH-01), Alcee L. Hastings (FL-23), David Trone (MD-06), Kathy Castor (FL-14), Mark Pocan (WI-02), Sheila Jackson Lee (TX-18), Nydia M. Velázquez (NY-12), Brian Fitzpatrick (PA-08), Tom Malinowski (NJ-07), Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr. (GA-04), Marcia Fudge (OH-11), Gregory Meeks (D-NY), and Andy Levin (D-MI).