

July 12, 2022

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate  
S-221 U.S. Capitol Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader, U.S. Senate  
S-230 U.S. Capitol Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives  
1236 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader, U.S. House of Representatives  
2468 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senate Majority Leader Schumer, Senate Minority Leader McConnell, Speaker of the House Pelosi, and House Minority Leader McCarthy:

The undersigned members and partners of the Clean Water for All Coalition write to express our strong support for H.R. 7632/S. 2369, the Tribal Access to Clean Water Act, which would provide much-needed funding to help address Tribal water infrastructure challenges.

Clean water and safe sanitation are essential needs for all communities, but tens of thousands of Native American households lack access to reliable drinking water and sewerage systems.<sup>1</sup> Experts estimate that Native American households are 19 times more likely than white households to lack indoor plumbing, and Tribal communities are more likely to have trouble accessing water than any other group.<sup>2</sup> Without water and sanitation, people experience significant impacts to their health, education, economic development, and daily life.

These disparities in access are the result of our nation's chronic underfunding of Tribal infrastructure. Last year's bipartisan Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) made progress toward closing the gap, but the needs of Tribes remain significant. Federal agencies have identified at least \$5.6 billion in necessary projects to address water and sanitation deficiencies in Native American homes.<sup>3</sup> Critically, Tribal communities need access to funds that can support both infrastructure construction costs and long-term operations and maintenance (O&M) expenses, the latter of which are excluded from IIJA's funding programs. Ongoing O&M support is necessary to prevent infrastructure from deteriorating and keep operational costs manageable.

The Tribal Access to Clean Water Act would help remedy our nation's underinvestment in Tribal infrastructure by providing more than \$2 billion for the Indian Health Service, Bureau of Reclamation, and United States Department of Agriculture. These resources would empower Native American communities to expand water and sanitation services, address water-related health risks, and keep water and sewer systems operating in good condition into the future. They

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure: Opportunities Exist to Enhance Federal Agency Needs Assessment and Coordination on Tribal Projects* (2018), <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-18-309>.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Water Alliance, *Closing the Water Access Gap in the United States* (2019), <https://www.digdeep.org/close-the-water-gap>.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. GAO, *Drinking Water and Wastewater Infrastructure*.

would also support technical assistance for communities that need help navigating the complex processes of project development and funding applications.

This legislation is a vital step toward our shared goal of wastewater and stormwater infrastructure that provides clean water for all. Our organizations urge you to advance and pass it as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

Jack West  
Policy and Advocacy Director  
Alabama Rivers Alliance

Don Jodrey  
Director of Federal Relations  
Alliance for the Great Lakes

Katie Huffling  
Executive Director  
Alliance of Nurses for a Healthy  
Environment

Colton Fagundes  
Senior Manager of Policy and Advocacy  
American Sustainable Business Network

Rachel Conn  
Deputy Director  
Amigos Bravos

Harriet Festing  
Executive Director  
Anthropocene Alliance

Kristen Schlemmer  
Legal Director & Waterkeeper  
Bayou City Waterkeeper

Hannah Connor  
Senior Attorney  
Center for Biological Diversity

Kristie Trousdale  
Deputy Director  
Children's Environmental Health Network

Sean Jackson  
National Water Campaigns Coordinator  
Clean Water Action

Kyle Jones  
Policy & Legal Director  
Community Water Center

Nickie Sekera  
Co-Founder  
Community Water Justice

Mary Gutierrez  
Director  
Earth Ethics, Inc.

Julian Gonzalez  
Legislative Counsel  
Earthjustice

Linda Clark  
Environmental Justice Team  
First Parish Cambridge UU Church

Ginny Madsen  
Founding Member  
First Wednesdays San Leandro

Nayyirah Shariff  
Director  
Flint Rising

Mary Grant  
Public Water for All Campaign Director  
Food & Water Watch

Jill M. Ryan  
Executive Director  
Freshwater Future

Maritza Mendoza  
Water Equity and Ocean Program Advocate  
GreenLatinos

Cynthia M. Sarthou  
Executive Director  
Healthy Gulf

Kathleen Deignan  
Dir., Deignan Institute for Earth and Spirit  
Iona College

Madeleine Foote  
Deputy Legislative Director  
League of Conservation Voters

Katharine Lange  
Policy Specialist  
Massachusetts Rivers Alliance

Katherine C. Bini  
Member, Steering Committee  
Metro N.Y. Catholic Climate Movement

Olivia Wein  
Staff Attorney  
National Consumer Law Center

Garrit Voggesser  
Tribal Partnerships Director  
National Wildlife Federation

Rebecca Hammer  
Deputy Director of Federal Water Policy  
Natural Resources Defense Council

Jon Driskell  
Chief Operating Officer  
Notah Begay III Foundation

Rev. Sandra L. Strauss  
Dir. of Advocacy & Ecumenical Outreach  
Pennsylvania Council of Churches

Yasmin Zaerpoor  
Dir. of Water Equity & Climate Resilience  
PolicyLink

Erica Maceda  
Executive Director  
River in Action

April Ingle  
Policy Director  
River Network

Janene Yazzie  
Co-Founder  
Sixth World Solutions

Geoff Gisler  
Senior Attorney  
Southern Environmental Law Center

Rebecca Malpass  
Policy & Research Coordinator  
The Water Collaborative of Greater New  
Orleans

Betsy Nicholas  
Executive Director  
Waterkeepers Chesapeake

Rachel Davis  
Public Policy & Justice Organizer  
Waterspirit

Caleb Merendino  
Co-Executive Director  
Waterway Advocates

cc: Senator Schatz, Chair, Senate Committee on Indian Affairs  
Representative Huffman, Chair, House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water,  
Oceans, and Wildlife  
Representative Leger Fernández, House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Indigenous  
Peoples of the United States  
Representative Maloney, Chair, House Agriculture Subcommittee on Commodity  
Exchanges, Energy, and Credit  
Representative Pallone, Chair, House Committee on Energy and Commerce