

NATIONAL UTILITY CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION**ON****“BUILDING BACK BETTER: THE URGENT NEED FOR INVESTMENT IN AMERICA’S
WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE”****SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE****FEBRUARY 23, 2021**

The National Utility Contractors Association (NUCA) represents construction contractors, manufacturers, and distributors who build and maintain a wide range of our nation’s infrastructure. Member companies provide the manpower and equipment needed to build, repair, and maintain the infrastructure needed for water and wastewater, gas distribution, broadband, electric as well as the nation’s surface transportation system. NUCA appreciates the opportunity to provide a statement for the record as the Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment

Our nation’s underground water and sewer infrastructure ensures that Americans have access to clean drinking water and safe sanitary wastewater systems, provides businesses with the resources they need to keep our economy moving, and protects our nation’s waterways, beaches, and a range of recreational opportunities. Taken together, well-functioning infrastructure is indispensable to the health of our country.

However, as wastewater systems continue to age and are tested by extreme weather events, communities face increasing difficulties in paying for needed infrastructure improvements. Recent events in Texas, where winter weather has left thousands without access to clean water, underscore the vulnerability of our nation’s water infrastructure and the dire need for additional investment. At the same time, federal spending accounted for just four percent of all spending on wastewater utility infrastructure in recent years. Given that the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) most recent assessment found that \$271 billion will be needed to maintain and replace wastewater and stormwater treatment systems over the next twenty years, Congress must act this year.

While investment in water and wastewater infrastructure enhances public health and environmental protection, it also creates high-paying jobs, generates significant economic activity and expands the local tax base. Industry studies have indicated that every \$1 billion invested in water and wastewater infrastructure creates up to some 28,000 new jobs with average annual earnings of more than \$50,000 and increases demand for products and services in other industries by more than \$3 billion.

Due to the economic ripple effect that construction employment offers, investment in water infrastructure generates measurable employment in hundreds of standard industry classifications recognized by the U.S. Census Bureau. Moreover, a \$1 billion investment also results in tens of millions of dollars in state and local tax revenue at a time when they unarguably need it most.

To that end, NUCA strongly supports measures that would ensure a steady level of federal investment in water infrastructure, and particularly a major reauthorization of the Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CW SRF). Likewise, NUCA would strongly support a significant increase in funding for the Water Infrastructure and Innovation Act (WIFIA) program, which provides long-term, low-cost credit assistance for regionally and nationally significant water and wastewater projects. Both the WIFIA and the CW SRF programs have proven highly efficient and successful since their establishment, but continue to suffer from a lack of reliable funding.

In addition to traditional public funding, NUCA continues to support innovative solutions to the funding shortfall facing America's clean water infrastructure. Congress should consider measures that would open the door for more private sector investment through innovative financing such as lifting the cap on exempt facility bonds (private activity bonds) for water and wastewater infrastructure projects.

NUCA's water infrastructure experts are available to your committee staff to discuss these issues and others solutions which have the promise to deliver what the American people want and deserve: reliable clean water and wastewater infrastructure systems to keep their communities safe and healthy.

We appreciate your leadership in examining this critical issue at a time when our nation's wastewater infrastructure is more in need of overhaul than ever. Thank you for your consideration.