

June 24, 2021

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein, Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Kennedy, Ranking Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chris Murphy, Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito, Ranking
Member
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Feinstein, Ranking Member Kennedy, Chair Murphy, and Ranking Member Capito:

As you draft Fiscal Year 2022 appropriations for the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development, and Related Agencies, and the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security, we urge you to provide the National Levee Safety Program with funding that meets the program's full \$79 million authorization. Specifically, we request that you provide the Energy and Water Development appropriations bill with \$54 million and the Homeland Security appropriations bill with \$25 million for the National Levee Safety Program. Every state in the nation and the District of Columbia rely on levees for flood control to reduce risk to homes, businesses, and property. It is estimated that U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) levee and shore protection projects prevented almost \$350 billion in flood damages from October 2018 to September 2019 alone. However, an estimated \$21 billion is needed to maintain and improve the nation's 30,000 documented miles of levees, and ASCE's *2021 Infrastructure Report Card* gave our nation's levees inventories a grade of "D."

The National Levee Safety Program was authorized in the Water Resources Reform and Development Act (WRRDA) of 2014 (PL 113 – 121 Sec. 3016) to promote consistent safety standards, create levee safety guidelines, and provide funding assistance to states and regional districts for establishing participating levee safety programs. America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018 reauthorized the program through FY23 (PL 115 – 270 Sec. 1144).

Although the USACE has been able to inventory 13,400 miles of levees under USACE's authority and another 15,460 miles of levees maintained by other federal, state, or local agencies in the National Levee Database (NLD), there is much work to be done in inventorying and determining the location and condition of all the levees outside of USACE's authority.

With nearly two-thirds of Americans living in a county with at least one levee and more than half of the U.S. population living within 50 miles of a coast with continued development in floodplains, levees play a critical life safety role. And while most levees within the portfolio are characterized as low risk, a larger portion of the population — about 45% — lives or works behind a high- or very high-risk levee.

Unfortunately, 80% of high- or very high-risk levees were found to have one or more levee performance concerns that would likely result in a breach prior to overtopping. Fully appropriating the program at \$79 million would play a crucial role in protecting people, communities, critical infrastructure systems, and trillions of dollars of property.

Ultimately, robust investment in this program is necessary to improve the nation's levee infrastructure. We thank you for your consideration of our funding request and look forward to working with the Subcommittee to fund this successful infrastructure program.

Sincerely,

American Council of Engineering Companies
American Society of Civil Engineers
Association of State Dam Safety Officials
Deep Foundations Institute
National Association of Flood and Stormwater Management Agencies
United States Society of Dams

cc: Chairman Patrick Leahy and Vice Chair Richard Shelby, U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations