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January 31, 2017

Hon. Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator for New York
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Federal Water Infrastructure Funding

Dear Senator Schumer:

Following the crises in Flint, Michigan, and Hoosick Falls, Petersburg, and Newburgh, New York, water quality is now an issue on the forefront of everyone's minds. You have frequently championed drinking and wastewater infrastructure projects, noting "It's unacceptable that in the 21st Century, New Yorkers have to boil their water before drinking."

We thank and applaud you for your leadership, and write to express our strong support for the water infrastructure funding concepts presented in the Senate Democrats' *Blueprint to Rebuild America's Infrastructure*. Federal investments – in the form of grants – for water infrastructure projects through the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Funds are crucial to meet growing water infrastructure needs. Our organizations stand with you to ensure Congress allocates additional funding for communities to address these needs.

Often overlooked until something goes terribly wrong, maintaining, updating, and repairing drinking and wastewater infrastructure is essential to community growth, as well as protecting public health and the environment.

While investment in water infrastructure alone cannot resolve all water quality issues, securing additional investments demonstrates a proactive approach for providing clean drinking water and safe waters for swimming, boating, and fishing – something the federal government has retreated from in recent decades. Additionally, clean water supports a strong business environment.

As you know, New York's tremendous need for funding is well-documented. EPA issued reports that show that over the next 20 years, New York faces the largest need in the country for clean water infrastructure investment at \$31.4 billion, and the third largest in the country for drinking water infrastructure investment at \$22 billion. Numbers like these have translated to a reality that has meant hundreds of water main breaks in cities across the state, and billions of gallons of raw

sewage in our precious waterways. Governor Andrew Cuomo reiterated this need, which is on the conservative side of estimates, in his SFY2017-18 Budget book.

In the face of this tremendous need, New York has stepped up as a national leader with the creation of the Water Infrastructure Improvement Act of 2015 (WIIA), a \$400 million, three-year grant program in the New York State budget. This grant program has been very successful, and, unsurprisingly, significantly overwhelmed with requests. According to New York's Environmental Facilities Corporation (EFC), just half of the applicants for the grant program were able to secure funding this past year. EFC stated in their 2017 CWSRF Intended Use Plan (IUP) they could only meet 25% of identified demand through zero or low-interest loans.

Most recently, Governor Cuomo proposed the Clean Water Infrastructure Act of 2017 in his 2017-18 Executive Budget proposal, which allocates \$400 million each year for five years to fund the WIIA and other water protection measures. However, New York cannot meet all water infrastructure needs alone; **additional federal funding is crucial.**

To this end, we support your efforts to provide \$110 billion for water infrastructure through successful, existing federal programs, including, for example the CWSRF and DWSRF. Additionally, we strongly support efforts to reduce local match requirements and provide grants, rather than loans, which will allow many cash-strapped communities to move forward with important water infrastructure projects without overburdening local ratepayers.

American citizens have the basic right and expectation from government that safe and clean water will come out of their taps, and that it won't make them sick. Not addressing aging water infrastructure threatens that right.

With your leadership, we hope to see the community grant funding proposed in Senate Democrats' *Blueprint to Rebuild America's Infrastructure* implemented to help municipalities fix their pipes. We thank you for your commitment to this issue and consideration of our comments.

Sincerely,

Adirondack Council

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CC: New York Congressional Delegation