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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Juan Vargas

51st District, California

COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES

SUBCOMMITTEE ON INVESTOR PROTECTION,
ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND CAPITAL MARKETS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOUSING,
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND INSURANCE

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WESTERN HEMISPHERE, CIVILIAN SECURITY,
AND TRADE

MIDDLE EAST, NORTH AFRICA,
AND INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM

March 17, 2020

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Chair
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on the Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
H-307, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable David Joyce
Ranking Member
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on the Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
2007 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair McCollum and Ranking Member Joyce:

We write in strong support of the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) U.S.-Mexico border programs, and respectfully request you include \$75 million in funding for the U.S.-Mexico Border Water Infrastructure Program (BWIP) in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Interior, Environment and Related Agencies appropriations bill. In 1998, 2001, and 2002 BWIP previously received \$75 million in funding, and we believe that in order for transboundary environmental problems to be solved, BWIP funding must be significantly increased. While \$75 million on an annual basis is a good base amount, we strongly believe that higher levels of funding are needed for more effective mitigation of transboundary flows.

Increased appropriations funding is especially important since President Trump's FY 2021 budget zeroed out funding for BWIP, as he also did in his budgets in FY 2018, 2019, and 2020. Additionally, we urge you to provide robust funding for the EPA's Office of International and Tribal Affairs which supports vital programs such as the Border 2020 environmental program and other related projects.

In just a few years, we will be approaching the 40th anniversary of the La Paz Agreement. The agreement defines the EPA's U.S.-Mexico border work to advance our priorities of protecting the environment and public health along the U.S.-Mexico border. EPA addresses the transboundary issues through both the U.S.-Mexico Border water infrastructure program and the US-Mexico Border 2020 environmental program.

The two-thousand-mile border between the United States and Mexico is one of the most complex and dynamic regions in the world, with a growing need to address trans-border environmental issues. The La Paz Agreement of 1983 and the Border 2012 program of 2003 have gone a long

way to protect and improve the health and environmental conditions along a border that extends from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Ocean. Building on the successes of the Border 2012 program, the Border 2020 program lays out a roadmap for continued environmental cooperation in the eight-year period between 2013 and 2020.

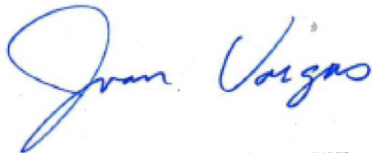
The U.S.-Mexico Border 2012 Program improved access to actionable information to increase compliance with water and air quality standards; reduced contamination through cleanup and proper disposal of 560 tons of used electronics and more than 12 million scraps tires from the largest tire piles; increased joint readiness for environmental response through enhanced training and equipment exchanges; and improved enforcement through coordinated communication and training.

The Border 2020 program outlines five goals: border-wide air pollution, access to clean and safe water, material and waste management, emergency preparedness, and compliance assurance. Projects funded address the greatest environmental health issues in the areas of greatest need in the U.S. and the trans-boundary issues along Mexico's U.S. border. During the time of its implementation, the Border 2020 Program has begun steps to improve the air quality in the Calexico-Mexicali Basin; motioned to improve the Tijuana River Valley wastewater infrastructure; and reduced waste from illegal dumping, cleaning 5,520 tons of trash and 1,760 scrap tires in 2017 alone.

BWIP is unique among federal funding programs. It is the only federal program that can fund projects on both sides of the border, with all projects benefiting communities on the U.S. side of the border. The EPA investments in these wastewater projects are protecting public health from waterborne diseases and have been a key factor in significant water quality improvements in the U.S. waterbodies, such as the Tijuana River and Pacific Ocean (California), the Rio Grande (Texas and New Mexico), the Santa Cruz River (Arizona), and the New River (California). Between 2003 and 2017, BWIP has provided more than 673,000 homes with adequate wastewater collection and treatment services. Most border communities have received access to these services for the first time. The program's funding has made significant progress addressing the public health and environmental impact of wastewater infrastructure among the U.S.-Mexico border.

We appreciate your consideration and strongly urge the Committee to provide robust funding for the EPA's U.S.-Mexico border programs at the requested amount. Underserved border communities are still challenged by existing infrastructure gaps and would greatly benefit by continued support for these programs.

Sincerely,



Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

Susan A. Davis
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Levin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Mike Levin
Member of Congress

Scott Peters
Member of Congress