



Rural Community
Assistance Partnership

January 27, 2022

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader, United States Senate
U.S. Capitol Building, Room S-224
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker, United States House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer and Speaker Pelosi:

On behalf of the Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP), we write to thank you for your continuing support for economic development and infrastructure investment in rural communities and urge you to prioritize support for underserved communities as negotiations continue on the Build Back Better Act. As a national network of non-profits reaching small and rural communities across the U.S., we know all too well that the economic crisis presented by COVID-19 has only served to exacerbate the challenges rural and underserved communities face.

The reconciliation package released by the Senate on October 28, 2021, contained significant investment in our nation's water infrastructure. Crucially, this bill appropriates funds to many programs that were authorized but not appropriated in the Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act. The programs in Build Back Better that are most critical to meeting the needs of rural communities include:

- \$225 million for low-income water customer assistance at EPA
- \$9 billion for lead remediation projects in disadvantaged communities through EPA
- \$1.85 billion for EPA's CSO and SSO grants
- \$975 million for lead remediation projects in rural disadvantaged communities through USDA
- \$97 million for USDA water and wastewater grant program
- \$1 billion for the USDA Rural Partnerships Program
- \$150 million for decentralized wastewater grants at EPA

Make no mistake: the effects of climate change are predominantly felt as water stress and are handled by our nation's water infrastructure. Whether drought, flooding, or sea level rise, it is our nation's water infrastructure that protects our communities—or doesn't. Build Back Better presents a critical opportunity to ensure rural communities have the resources they need to combat climate change while continuing to operate water and wastewater services.

While increased authorizations are welcome, these programs must be appropriated in BBB or else the critical work of building cleaner, safer, more reliable, more affordable, and more resilient water infrastructure systems—particularly in rural communities—cannot begin.

RCAP works with communities and partners across the country to advocate for and generate economic opportunities and infrastructure investment for rural areas and to ensure that every community has the resources needed to thrive. The services provided through these programs will deliver critical assistance in the small and disadvantaged communities where it is most needed.

We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to ensure this important funding is included in the Build Back Better Act.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nathan Ohle". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Nathan" being more prominent than the last name "Ohle".

Nathan Ohle, Chief Executive Officer
RCAP

Cc: Chairman Sanders, Chairman Carper, Chairwoman Murray, Chairwoman Stabenow, Chairman Yarmuth, Chairman Pallone, Chairman Defazio, and Chairman Scott.