

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 14, 2018

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
B-308 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, and Related Agencies
1016 Longworth HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Calvert and Ranking Member McCollum:

As the occurrence and severity of harmful algal blooms (HABs) increases throughout our country, more communities are facing threats to their drinking water, waterways, and economies. Our understanding of HABs, their toxicity, location, and increasing frequency, is not keeping pace with the rate at which they occur. As you develop the fiscal year 2018 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we write to urge strong appropriations for the research programs on HABs within the United States Geological Survey (USGS). Specifically, we request that you maintain fiscal year 2017 funding levels for the Toxic Substances Hydrology Account, to support research into cyanobacteria, strengthening our ability to forecast HABs and enabling us to better understand the environmental triggers for their toxicity.

In August of last year, the EPA reported that at least 19 states had active public health advisories due to toxic cyanobacterial HABs. These naturally occurring phenomena produce toxins which can infiltrate municipal drinking systems and cause acute and chronic illnesses in humans. HABs have been implicated in human and animal illness and death in at least 43 states across our country. Strengthening investments in water infrastructure to preserve clean and safe drinking water and to prevent these toxins from reaching residents is imperative. However, in order to truly combat the threats HABs pose to public health, we must couple investments in water infrastructure with increased research into the cause, occurrence, and frequency of HABs.

The USGS is leading studies into different methods to address HABs across the country, including research on advanced warning systems, sensors that measure cyanobacteria toxicity levels in real-time, as well as nutrient monitoring systems. These studies, utilizing emerging technologies and benefiting from close collaboration with local, state, federal, tribal, and

university partners, may lead us to more efficient, proactive responses to potential HAB outbreaks to better protect our ecosystems and the drinking water of millions of Americans.

In recognition of the benefit these studies have to our communities and preservation of our natural resources, we urge the Subcommittee to include the following report language for the fiscal year 2018 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill:

“The Committee supports the continuation of USGS research on understanding the prevalence of toxins in the nation’s natural bodies of water by expanding their understanding of cyanobacteria and toxins in stream and wetland ecosystems. USGS is encouraged to participate in interagency efforts to expedite the development of remote sensing tools to assist with early event warning delivered through mobile devices and web portals.”

In order to effectively combat HABs and address the threats they pose to public health and our economy, we respectfully ask that you prioritize research on HABs and maintain fiscal year 2017 funding levels for the Toxic Substances Hydrology Account within the USGS.

Sincerely,



John Katko
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



Elizabeth Esty
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Daniel T. Kildee
Member of Congress



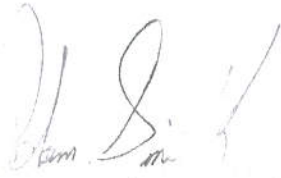
Darren Soto
Member of Congress



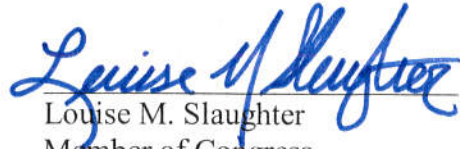
Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress



Carlos Curbelo
Member of Congress



Adam Smith (WA-09)
Member of Congress



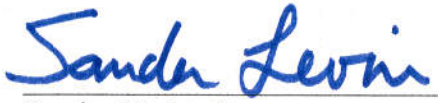
Louise M. Slaughter
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Mike Kelly
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Mark DeSaulnier
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Sander M. Levin
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Tulsi Gabbard
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