

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 18, 2017

The Honorable Richard C. Shelby
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby and Ranking Member Shaheen:

As the Committee on Appropriations begins the process of crafting a comprehensive, long-term spending measure that governs Fiscal Year 2018 (FY18), we write to urge the subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies to ensure such bill provides robust funding for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA's) ocean and coastal programs, in particular NOAA's coastal zone management and services program; the Coastal Zone Management and Regional Coastal Resilience Grants; the National Estuarine Research Reserve System; the National Sea Grant College Program; and the National Oceans and Coastal Security Fund. These efforts promote federal, state, and local coordination while providing the essential tools, research, and support necessary for maintaining healthy, vibrant, and productive coastal communities and economies. Investing in programs such as these that promote resilience and safeguard our coastal economies is more important than ever before. Protecting lives and property as we prepare for changing conditions in our oceans and along our coasts requires science and know-how that NOAA is uniquely able to provide.

We respectfully request your support for the following programs:

Coastal Zone Management and Services: Coastal states and local governments are essential to fostering resilient coastal communities and managing precious natural resources. Since passage of the Coastal Zone Management Act (CZMA) in 1972, NOAA has supported the National Coastal Zone Management Program by providing financial assistance, policy guidance, coordination and leadership, technical assistance, and other support to help implement the 34 voluntary state coastal zone management programs along our oceans and Great Lakes. *We urge that \$54 million in funding be adopted for FY18, \$12.5 million above the FY17 enacted level, to support continued, robust investment in strong and resilient coastal economies.*

Coastal Zone Management Grants: Each year, our nation's ocean and Great Lakes economy contributes around \$350 billion to the U.S. GDP. With such a high level of economic activity and output, there is a clear need to provide support for programs that promote smart economic development while enhancing environmental protections in these regions. Coastal Zone Management Grants, which are further leveraged with non-federal match dollars, support a number of projects, including those that better enable public access and beach recreation, improve working waterfronts and development of ocean-related businesses, mapping storm

vulnerability and developing adaptation strategies for threatened coastal regions. *For FY18, we urge the Committee to include \$111 million, an increase of \$41 million over the FY17 enacted level, in funding for the Coastal Zone Management Grants, in its spending measure.*

Regional Coastal Resilience Grants: In FY17, NOAA combined the National Marine Fisheries Service's Coastal Ecosystem Resiliency Grants program with the National Ocean Service's Regional Coastal Resilience Grant program to create the Regional Coastal Resilience Grants program. This combined program continues to focus on the economic and environmental priorities of its predecessors while also fostering greater interconnectedness between healthy coastal habitats and communities. These grants help states, local communities, and other stakeholders produce on-the-ground results that benefit both the economy and the environment, including cutting edge science and practical tools like maps and surveys. The need for these programs is significant: a 2016 GAO report found that only around 4 percent of qualified applications were able to be funded in FY15. *We urge the Committee to include \$20 million in funding for the Regional Coastal Resilience Grants Program in its FY18 spending measure, an increase of \$5 million over the FY17 enacted level.*

National Estuarine Research Reserve System: The National Estuarine Research Reserve System (NERRS) protects more than 1.3 million acres of coastal and estuarine lands and waters through a network of 29 coastal sites across the nation. More than 1,100 cities and towns and 570 businesses directly benefit from the scientific and technical expertise provided by these reserves each year. By protecting and monitoring estuaries and coasts, NERRS reduces community vulnerability to hazards, supports the nation's coastal economy, and provides abundant high-quality scientific research. Funding for the program is matched by the states and leveraged, resulting in an average of more than five additional partners at each reserve. *To enhance data collection and delivery and support the development of a graduate fellowship program at each of the 29 reserves, we urge that \$27 million in funding for operations be adopted for FY18, an increase of \$3.5 million over the FY17 enacted level, and that \$1.7 million again be adopted for Procurement, Acquisitions and Construction Activities to support existing NERRS sites.*

National Sea Grant College Program: The National Sea Grant College Program (Sea Grant) is a joint federal-state program that supports the health and resilience of the nation's coastal communities—including the Great Lakes, Gulf of Mexico, and Atlantic and Pacific coasts—yielding quantifiable economic, social, and environmental benefits at the national, regional, state, and local levels. Sea Grant is a unique program within NOAA, and one that has long enjoyed bipartisan support. Around 95 percent of the funds appropriated to Sea Grant are disbursed to coastal states through a competitive grant process aimed at solving the toughest problems facing our country's coastal communities. Sea Grant promotes efficient, cost-effective partnerships between state universities, NOAA, coastal communities, fishermen, business, and other stakeholders. Through these partnerships, the funding provided by this Committee for 2016 was leveraged to generate \$575 million in economic impact and to create or sustain 20,770 jobs and more than 2,900 businesses. *We urge that \$80 million in funding be adopted for FY18, an increase of \$17 million over the FY17 enacted level, to support the existing network and ongoing activities and to provide additional funding for efforts to strengthen Sea Grant's work related to coastal resilience.*

National Oceans and Coastal Security Fund: Enacted as part of the FY16 Consolidated Appropriations Act, the National Oceans and Coastal Security Fund provides grants to states, tribes, NGOs, and academic institutions for coastal restoration and research. The fund is managed jointly by NOAA and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF). Eligible uses of funds include habitat restoration and protection, smart coastal development, cooperative fisheries and resource management, protection of critical coastal public infrastructure, and baseline data collection on the effects of sea level rise, changing ocean chemistry, and other coastal processes. *We urge that \$10 million in funding be adopted for FY 2018 to directly support this dedicated fund for the oceans and coasts.*

Sincerely,



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate



SHELDON WHITEHOUSE
United States Senate



EDWARD J. MARKEY
United States Senate



DEBBIE STABENOW
United States Senate



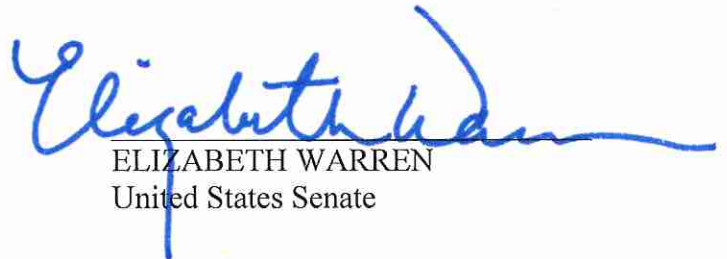
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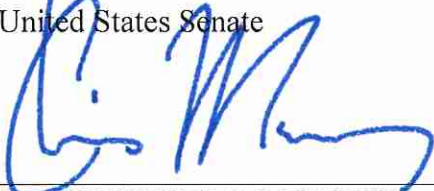
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United States Senate



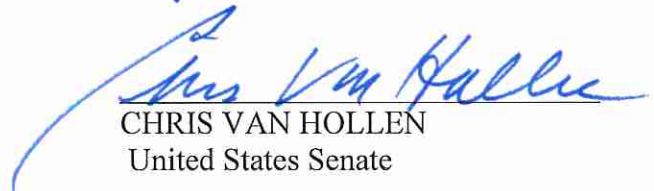
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