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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

CHAIRMAN, CONGRESSIONAL EXECUTIVE
COMMISSION ON CHINA

CHAIRMAN, GLOBAL HEALTH, GLOBAL
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COMMISSION

SENIOR MEMBER, HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE

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May 9, 2024

The Honorable Tom Cole
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
H-307, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
H-307, U.S. Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Steve Womack
Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
2358-A Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Quigley
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Transportation,
Housing and Urban Development,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
1036 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cole, Ranking Member DeLauro, Chairman Womack, and Ranking Member Cartwright,

I write to respectfully request Community Project Funding in fiscal year 2025 for the Eatontown Community Flood Mitigation Project Part II, in Eatontown, New Jersey, 07724.

This project, requested by the Borough of Eatontown, intends to increase housing and economic resiliency by mitigating catastrophic flooding in the historic district of this diverse community centered around Wampum Lake.

The residents in the Wampum Lake watershed region of Eatontown are predominantly apartment occupants and it is this area that experiences repetitive, significant flooding events due to lack of short-term runoff storage available in the watershed. During high-intensity rainfall events, Wampum Lake runoff backs up into various properties, most notably, but not exclusively, onto the Eatoncrest Apartment Homes property. The effects of the flooding are significant and dangerous for the residents of Eatoncrest – a 412-unit complex which houses a cross-section of income levels including those utilizing Section 8 assistance and those without significant financial means, including seniors. A typical flooding event can cause significant apartment damage as well as vehicle damage for residents.

The intensive flooding undermines roadways and support structures, including NJ State Route 35, the central artery that runs through Eatontown and hosts a significant number of

businesses, and is a primary road for emergency response. Emergency response is delayed for residents located in the immediate area of Wampum Lake as traversing flooded streets is difficult and parking of emergency vehicles such as ambulances and fire trucks is not possible on soggy ground.

The project has overwhelming support from the local community, especially local law enforcement and emergency response agencies. This project has a federal nexus authorized by Chapter 42 U.S.C. Section 5305(a)(2). This is an appropriate use of taxpayer funds as it will go towards the reconstruction of public works that prevent cyclical flood damage along Eatontown's main street and the surrounding areas which are densely populated, and promote the development of resilient greenspace, and economic development along a critical transportation corridor. This project supports the statutory goals of the Community Development Block Grant program by securing safe and suitable housing, protecting and safeguarding open space, and ensure sustainable economic development for the Eatontown community.

This request represents Phase II of a larger project which received federal funds for Phase I in FY2023, for which the Borough is grateful to the committee for recognizing the urgent need for action to help forestall economic damages and ensure a stable environment for future economic growth. Phase I concerned increasing short-term storm water storage to reduce flooding and the damage it causes to housing, businesses, roads, and transportation—and it has helped.

As such, Phase II completes the work and consists of infrastructure repairs and improvements to enable the municipality to lower the water level of Wampum Lake in advance of a storm event and bring the road infrastructure up to modern compliance standards to prevent cyclical damage to housing, businesses, roads, transportation, and recreational greenspace. Of additional concern, Wampum Lake is directly upstream from the former Fort Monmouth, which is undergoing largescale redevelopment into apartment housing and business developments.

Phase II of the engineering plan also envisions improvements to infrastructure associated with Wampum Lake Dam and the spillway which runs under NJ State Route 35 (Main Street), and the upstream watershed corridor which abuts a large number of apartments. The Wampum Lake Dam was originally constructed in 1937 under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration (WPA), undergoing renovations in 1955 and 1995.

Currently, the sluice gates designed to manage overflow into secondary spillways are not functional, and the larger structure is not in compliance with current engineering best practices. Additionally, Wampum Lake is adjacent to the borough's Veteran's Memorial Park and the property on the Borough's Recreational and Open Space Inventory (RSOI) List. Integrating resilient hardscaping and landscape features to realize habitat restoration along the lake and removing invasive non-native species to create a living shoreline, will better allow the Borough to rehabilitate existing water control structures and prevent further environmental degradation which negatively impacts the towns plans for economic development.

For Phase II and completion of the Eatontown Flood Mitigation Project centered around Wampum Lake, the Borough requests \$3,000,000 which will be apportioned to the planning,

structural and engineering design, permitting, construction, and environmental restoration needed to fully complete the project.

Thank you in advance for your careful consideration of my request for assistance for the Eatontown Flood Mitigation Project Phase II. I appreciate the Committee's due consideration of the proposal.

I certify that neither I nor my immediate family has any financial interest in this project.

Sincerely,



CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH
Member of Congress