

**Testimony of Representative Terri A. Sewell of Alabama**

**U.S. House of Representatives  
Transportation & Infrastructure Committee  
Water Resources Development Act of 2024 Member Day Hearing**

**January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

Thank you, Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Larsen, and members of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for the opportunity to submit testimony before you today. As you draft the Water Resources Development Act of 2024, I would like to request an adjustment to the non-federal cost share for the construction of the Selma Flood Risk Management and Bank Stabilization project that was authorized in the 2022 Water Resources Development Act.

Flooding caused by various storms and hurricanes in recent years has created severe river erosion in the downtown area of Selma, Alabama. As a result, many buildings along the riverbank have become structurally compromised, and some buildings have already collapsed into the Alabama River. Moreover, Army Corps of Engineers officials from the Mobile District warn that the historic Edmond Pettus Bridge could be threatened if the river erosion is not addressed immediately.

As the site of the historic Bloody Sunday and Selma to Montgomery March of 1965, the preservation of the historic Edmund Pettus Bridge and the Selma Riverfront is not only important for the City of Selma, but also the nation. Every year, a bipartisan group of Members of Congress make the pilgrimage to Selma to retrace the steps of our former colleague John Lewis across the Edmund Pettus Bridge to reflect on the role that the people of Selma played in the advancement of our great democracy. This history must be preserved.

As authorized in the WRDA 2022 bill, the Selma Flood Risk Management and Bank Stabilization project will reduce the risk of failure of ten historic structures along the riverbank, protect this Edmund Pettus Bridge, and provide a response plan for imminent flooding events.

However, as the non-federal sponsor, the City of Selma simply cannot afford the \$9.26 million cost share that is currently required for this construction project. The median household income in Selma is only \$31,000 a year, and 30% of Selma's residents live in poverty. The city clearly meets the definition of an Economically Disadvantaged Community according to the implementation guidance for the Water Resources Act of 2020.

Moreover, tomorrow marks the one-year anniversary of the severe storms and tornadoes that caused devastation across my district, including in the City of Selma. This disaster placed an unprecedented financial burden on the City to begin recovery and rebuilding efforts.

Simply put, if the current cost-share is not addressed, this desperately needed Army Corps of Engineers project will be significantly delayed, the severe erosion along the Alabama River will continue, more historic buildings will collapse into the river, and the historic Edmund Pettus Bridge's structural integrity will remain under threat.

Not only do the residents of Selma deserve to be protected from flooding, but the nation deserves to have this historically significant site protected. I thank the committee for your consideration of my request, and I look forward to working with all of you to resolve this issue in the 2024 Water Resources Development Act.