



Rural Community
Assistance Partnership

December 5, 2024

The Honorable Thomas R. Carper
Chairman
Senate Environment and Public
Works Committee
U.S. 410 Dirksen Senate Office
Building Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Senate Environment and Public
Works Committee
456 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sam Graves
Chairman
House Transportation and
Infrastructure Committee
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen
Ranking Member
House Transportation and
Infrastructure Committee
2163 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Carper, and Ranking Member Capito, Chairman Graves, and Ranking Member Larsen

On behalf of the Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP), we are writing to express our strong support for the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2024. Maintaining the two-year bipartisan and bicameral cadence of WRDA reauthorization is vital to ensuring that America's water systems and economic infrastructure remain robust and effective. This consistent schedule will be particularly important in 2026 when key EPA programs are set to expire and require renewal to sustain critical funding streams.

In 2023 alone, RCAP provided essential technical assistance to over 2,000 rural communities, serving populations with an average of 1,516 residents and median household incomes of \$41,207. Our work focuses on addressing the unique challenges faced by rural areas, including access to safe drinking water, sanitary wastewater systems, and resilient infrastructure. Provisions in WRDA have been vital to these efforts, and its reauthorization is essential for fostering continued progress.

We are also particularly encouraged by the provisions to reauthorize and strengthen the Economic Development Administration's (EDA) capacity to serve rural, distressed, and energy transition communities. As an organization dedicated to advancing the prosperity of rural communities across the nation, RCAP is deeply invested in ensuring that rural and underserved areas have the resources and support they need to thrive. EDA's programs are crucial for catalyzing economic revitalization in these areas by providing critical investments in infrastructure, workforce development, and technical assistance. The reauthorization will:

- **Establish regional Technical Assistance Liaisons** to help rural communities navigate and access federal resources effectively. These liaisons bridge capacity gaps, ensuring communities can fully leverage available opportunities.
- **Create an Office of Disaster Recovery and Resilience within EDA**, which will provide targeted support for communities facing challenges like hurricanes, wildfires, and flooding. This office will enhance national economic security by improving recovery efforts and future preparedness.

- **Expand broadband and critical infrastructure programs** to bolster connectivity and economic opportunities in rural areas, helping communities adapt and thrive in an increasingly digital economy.

RCAP stands ready to support the implementation of WRDA and partner with Congress, EPA, EDA, and federal agencies to maximize the impact of these critical programs. By ensuring the continued reauthorization of WRDA and EDA, Congress can secure a healthier and more prosperous future for rural communities across America.

Thank you for your commitment to strengthening America's water and economic infrastructure. We look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure the success of these vital initiatives.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Olga', written in dark ink.

Olga Morales Pate

Chief Executive Officer, Rural Community Assistance Partnership