

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 18, 2019

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Udall:

When Americans go to the beach, they deserve to know that the water is safe. In order to provide this assurance, we ask that you provide at least \$10 million in funding for the Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health (BEACH) Act grant program in Fiscal Year (FY) 2020. Since the BEACH Act became law in 2000, water quality testing grants have benefitted coastal communities from New Jersey to Oregon, Maine to Florida, and the Great Lakes to the Gulf Coast.

America's beaches and lakeshores are some of our country's greatest natural resources, hosting over 100 million visitors each year. Families across the country look forward to beach vacations and expect that it will be safe to go in the water. BEACH Act grants allow States to protect the safety of these visitors by conducting water quality tests, posting warning signs, or even closing beaches when bacteria levels indicate the water is too contaminated.

Recreating in polluted water exposes Americans to pathogens that can cause gastrointestinal illness, skin rashes, and ear, eye, and staph infections, and directly contributes to public health costs of \$2.9 billion nationwide. The elimination of the BEACH Act grant program would further increase public health costs as less water quality information would be available to warn beachgoers of polluted conditions. It would also put at risk the nation's \$115 billion coastal tourism and recreation sectors, which are driven by public confidence in healthy beaches and support 2.3 million jobs nationwide.

BEACH Act grants have supported the monitoring of thousands of beaches in a cost-effective manner that keeps our constituents and communities safe. At the same time, inflation and budget cuts have forced states to make do with less, resulting in most states monitoring fewer beaches and shortening their monitoring season. Given the high economic value of clean coastal waters and the importance of protecting the health of those who recreate at the beach, a \$10 million appropriation is a sound investment in our nation's economy and public health.

We all share the goal of protecting the health of swimmers and other recreational water users. Without adequate funding, many States will eliminate or significantly curtail their beach water quality monitoring programs. With over 20,000 beach closures and advisories issued every year, funding for beach monitoring is as critical as ever.

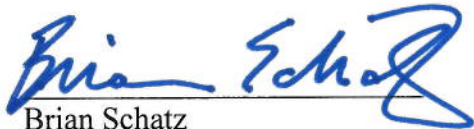
Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



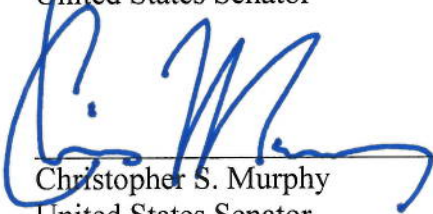
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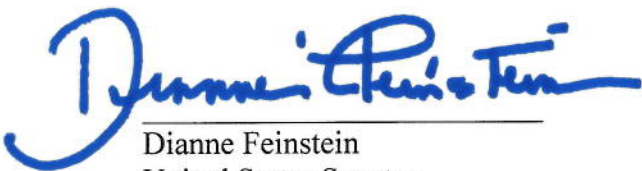
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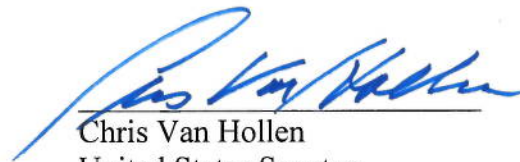
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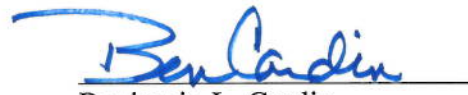

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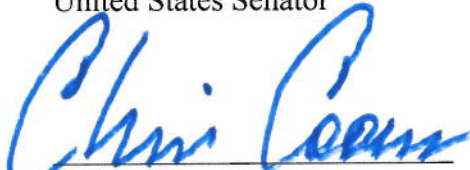

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Sherrod Brown
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Cory A. Booker
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Tammy Baldwin
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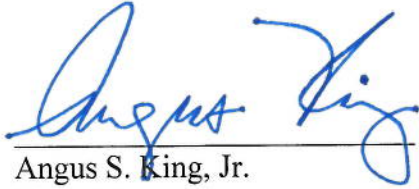

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