



LONG ISLAND REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

1864 Muttontown Road Syosset, New York 11791

www.lirpc.org | 516-571-7613

August 5, 2020

The Honorable Lee Zeldin
2441 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Peter King
302 Cannon House Office Building
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Tom Suozzi
214 Cannon House Office Building
Washington D.C. 20515

RE: Extending the expenditure of funds deadline for programs created by P.L 113-2

Dear Representative Zeldin, Representative King, and Representative Suozzi:

I am writing on behalf of the Long Island Regional Planning Council (LIRPC). As you may know, the LIRPC – which collaborates with Counties, Towns, Cities and Villages on a range of issues, most notably the Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan – comprises public and private sector leaders who are experienced and knowledgeable in business, environment, transportation and planning. The LIRPC, as Long Island’s chief planner, actively identifies and advocates for “Projects of Regional Significance.”

The LIRPC strongly supports extending the expenditure of funds deadline for programs created by P.L.113-2 in any future appropriations legislation. The Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) and National Disaster Resilience (CDBG-NDR) programs established by P.L.113-2 provided billions of dollars to improve disaster preparedness in communities across our nation. These programs established the Rebuild by Design and National Disaster Resiliency Competition which encouraged state and local governments to develop new methods for managing the accelerating consequences of a changing world’s climates. These complicated projects can help build resilient infrastructure in existing densely populated areas that improve the local economy, create jobs, and help ensure taxpayers do not continue to foot the bill for repetitive, onerous losses caused by natural disasters like hurricanes.

Many of the projects funded by P.L.113-2 had been on track to be completed by the September 30, 2022 deadline to expend funds. However, the ongoing COVID-19 public health crisis has put the completion of these projects at risk. We urge you to extend the deadline in any future appropriations legislation for expending funds in P.L.113-2 to ensure states and localities have the time needed to complete these projects.

Easing deadlines will help to ensure that critical projects – like the Suffolk County Coastal Resiliency Initiative (SCCRI) – are not derailed due to delays caused by the COVID-19 public health crisis. These delays, which have occurred at a crucial point in the funding approval process, make it challenging for the SCCRI projects to comply with existing deadlines. Noteworthy is the fact that, the SCCRI projects embodies the largest investment in water quality infrastructure in Suffolk County in more than 40 years – approximately \$390 million. These projects combined will eliminate nearly 7,000 cesspools and septic systems that represent the single largest

source of nitrogen pollution to Long Island's south shore bays. These sewerage projects will help to reverse the negative impacts that nitrogen pollution has had on coastal wetlands, which play a key role in shielding communities from storm surge and are essential to the region's economic and environmental health.

The County was working diligently to meet the requirements to utilize federal funds in full by the 2022 deadline. However, the ongoing pandemic has caused unexpected delays. Labor contracts and supply chains have further complicated the long lead times needed to implement this large-scale infrastructure projects. These delays have put the full federal funding for these projects at risk as it is unlikely the County will be able to meet the current deadlines.

As this pandemic continues to impact every community in America, significant adjustments are needed to previously scheduled deadlines. We urge you to help our states, cities, and towns by extending the expenditure of funds deadline for programs created by P.L.113-2, ensuring that Suffolk County's vitally important sewerage projects can move forward to completion during this challenging time in our history.

Thank you very much for your time and attention to our request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John D. Cameron, Jr." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

John D. Cameron, Jr., P.E.
Chair, Long Island Regional Planning Council

Cc. Governor Andrew Cuomo
Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone
Suffolk County Legislator Al Krupski
Suffolk County Legislator Bridget Fleming
Suffolk County Legislator Rudolph Sunderman
Suffolk County Legislator Tom Muratore
Suffolk County Legislator Kara Hahn
Suffolk County Legislator Sarah Anker
Suffolk County Legislator Robert Calarco
Suffolk County Legislator Anthony Piccirillo
Suffolk County Legislator Samuel Gonzalez
Suffolk County Legislator Tom Cilmi
Suffolk County Legislator Steven Flotteron
Suffolk County Legislator Leslie Kennedy
Suffolk County Legislator Robert Trota
Suffolk County Legislator Kevin McCaffrey
Suffolk County Legislator Susan Berland
Suffolk County Legislator Thomas Donnelly
Suffolk County William Spencer

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 18, 2020

Speaker Nancy Pelosi
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Democratic Leader
United States Senate
S-220, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Leader McConnell and Leader Schumer:

We write you today to ask that you extend the expenditure deadlines for federal disaster relief grant programs created by Public Law 113-2 for high priority resiliency projects on Long Island.

As you know, shortly after Superstorm Sandy, the Disaster Relief Appropriations Act of 2013 (P.L. 113-2) provided for more than \$50 billion for disaster recovery efforts, \$16 billion of which was dedicated for Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) and Community Development Block Grant – National Disaster Resilience (CDBG-NDR) programs to help communities devastated from Superstorm Sandy. New York State was the largest beneficiary of this funding, receiving more than \$4.4 billion. However, many ongoing projects are at risk of losing this critical funding.

There are three high priority resiliency projects on Long Island that are in jeopardy due to the explicit timeline to expend obligated disaster recovery funds as determined by P.L. 113-2. As part of the Suffolk County Coastal Resiliency Initiative (SCCRI), the Village of Patchogue and Town of Babylon are constructing upgraded sewer systems that will reduce nitrogen loading and mitigate the impacts of coastal flooding, storm surges, and on-site wastewater system failures. These projects will also protect human health by reducing the threats of diseases and infections due to an increase in pathogens from wastewater contamination.

New York State Governor's Office of Storm Recovery (GOSR) is also utilizing P.L. 113-2 disaster recovery grant funding to complete a "Rebuild By Design" project called Living with the Bay. Currently, GOSR is rehabilitating a 100-year-old dam as well as constructing marshes, bulkheads, and dikes to improve flood resiliency along the Mill River, which runs from Hempstead Lake to the Great South Bay.

GOSR is also depending on P.L. 113-2 grant funding to protect and enhance the lives of vulnerable, low- and moderate- income residents in storm-impacted public housing developments on Long Island. The Public Housing Resiliency Pilot Project is a State-coordinated effort to help the Town of Hempstead Housing Authority and Long Beach Housing Authority perform critical resiliency improvements for public housing sites in Long Beach, Oceanside, and Inwood. These housing authorities have very limited resources to address growing resiliency needs on their own, and this funding is providing critical assistance to build back-up power generation systems, retrofit building exteriors, and build nature-based stormwater management features.

All of these projects were on track to finish by the September 30, 2022 deadline to expend funds, but supply chains and labor contracts have been negatively impacted by the global COVID-19 pandemic. According to a 2018 National Institute of Building Sciences report, the federal government realizes a national benefit of \$6 for every \$1 invested in natural hazard mitigation efforts. These socially-profitable expenses are especially important at this time as we navigate the economic impacts of COVID-19. Granting an expenditure deadline extension for CBDG-DR and CBDG-NDR grants authorized by P.L. 113-2 on Long Island would both support local jobs and harden our infrastructure to be more resilient against future natural disasters.

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Kathleen M. Rice
Member of Congress



Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress



Lee Zeldin
Member of Congress



Peter T. King
Member of Congress



Gregory W. Meeks
Member of Congress



August 3, 2020

The Honorable Lee Zeldin
New York State Congressman District 1
2441 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Relaxation of Deadlines - Suffolk County Coastal Resiliency Initiative Sewer Projects

Dear Congressman Zeldin,

We write to urge action by the Congress support to extend the expenditure of funds deadline for programs created by P.L.113-2. This bipartisan Post-Sandy disaster recovery legislation provided much needed support to large-scale construction projects that would make cities and states across our country more resilient against natural disasters.

The Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) program established by P.L.113-2 provided billions of dollars to improve disaster preparedness in communities across our nation. These programs established the Rebuild by Design and National Disaster Resiliency Competition which encouraged state and local governments to develop new methods for managing the accelerating consequences of changing world climates. These complicated projects can help build resilient infrastructure that improve the local economy, create jobs, and help ensure taxpayers do not continue to foot the bill for repetitive, onerous losses.

Many of the projects funded by P.L.113-2 had been on track to be completed by the September 30, 2022 deadline to expend funds. However, the ongoing COVID-19 public health crisis has put the completion of many of these projects at risk. Among them are the Suffolk County Coastal Resiliency Initiative (SCCRI) sewer projects. Suffolk County and New York State are not alone in this regard. As indicated in the enclosed article, projects in many other states are also at risk.

At almost \$390 million, the SCCRI projects mark the largest investment in water quality infrastructure in the County in more than 40 years, and will eliminate nearly 7,000 cesspools and septic systems that have been identified as the single largest source of nitrogen pollution to our region's south shore bays. The extension of sewers to these areas will dramatically jump start an economic recovery and are part of a comprehensive effort to reduce nitrogen pollution that adversely affects coastal wetlands which protect communities from damaging storms.

Funding sources for the project include: \$243 million in Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funding through the Federal Emergency Management Agency, \$67 million in Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, \$59.7m from New York State Water Quality and Capital Programs, \$20.3 million to be financed through low-interest loans from the

Clean Water State Revolving Fund administered by the New York State Environmental Facilities Corporation, and \$4 million from the Empire State Development grant program.

Over the past four years, Suffolk County, the Governor's Office of Storm Recovery (GOSR), the New York State Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Services (DHSES) and FEMA have worked successfully to keep these projects on track. With the projects now moving into the contract letting process, it would be most unfortunate if delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic put them in jeopardy.

Specific examples of interruptions in the project implementation schedule include:

- 1) Public meetings that had been scheduled to provide information necessary to advance the projects to nearly 5,000 property owners were required to be canceled.
- 2) Private sector engineering firms responsible for project design were required by Executive Order to direct non-essential staff to remain at home, causing delays and interruptions of project designs, short of completion.
- 3) Contract letting schedules have been revised and bid opening dates pushed back in response to restrictions imposed as part of the overall response to the pandemic.

Taken together, these COVID 19 related delays have made it highly unlikely that the projects can be completed in time to comply with existing September, 2022 deadline for the expenditure of CDBG-DR funding provided pursuant to P.L. 113-2. Given the importance of these historic projects to Long Island's economy and environment, I request that your office play an active role in facilitating action by Congress to extend the deadline for the expenditure Post-Sandy CDBG-DR funds.

Sincerely,



Mitchell H. Pally
Chief Executive Officer