To: Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee

Date: Tuesday, April 1st, 2025

From: The Honorable Sylvia R. Garcia (D-TX-29)

Re: Fiscal Year 2026 Member Testimony for Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittee Member Day

---

Thank you, Mr. Chair, Ranking Member, and Committee Members, for the opportunity to provide written testimony for the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Subcommittee Appropriations Member Day.

This is an important opportunity for Members of the House of Representatives to advocate for our constituents, advocate for critical investments in the communities we represent, and help shape the appropriations process for Fiscal Year 2025.

As such, I would like to highlight key community funding projects, as well as programmatic and language requests that I will submit to the Subcommittee that would significantly impact the lives of working families, children, and seniors in the Texas 29th Congressional District.

These requests represent significant investments for safe drinking water infrastructure, efforts to prevent pollution, and clean air initiatives focused on improving air quality in communities across the nation.

These investments would bolster efforts to reduce lead in drinking water and remove lead service lines, support cleaning up superfund sites, some of the nation's most contaminated land, and help protect communities from the negative impacts of PFAS.

More specifically, I support and urge the highest possible funding for the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) State and Tribal Assistance Grants program, which focuses on clean air initiatives; pollution prevention pollution prevention, abatement, and monitoring; and other air quality grant programs under Section 103 and Section 105 of the Clean Air Act.

I also urge full funding of the Reducing Lead in Drinking Water program. The program currently awards funding for the reduction of lead in drinking water in disadvantaged communities through drinking water infrastructure, treatment improvements, and facility remediation in schools and childcare facilities in states and tribal communities. Relatedly, we must continue to invest in lead testing in schools and childcare facilities. The CDC has made clear that the health impacts of lead on children are catastrophic. The danger posed by lead is horrifically widespread and not understood – many schools do not even know if the water their students drink is tainted by lead. This voluntary grant will help assist local and tribal educational agencies and childcare programs in testing for lead in drinking water at their facilities.

To fully combat lead in our drinking water, we must continue to invest in the EPA's State and Tribal Assistance Grants account for lead service line replacement through the Drinking Water Revolving Fund (DWSRF). DWSRF provides funding for lead service line removal in all 50 states and territories. Despite being banned in 1986, millions of lead pipes still supply lead-contaminated

water nationwide. This is a serious public health and safety problem, and providing funds through the DWSRF will ensure that the U.S. continues to move towards the goal of 100% lead pipe replacement within 10 years.

In schools across the nation, Congress needs to invest in the EPA's comprehensive Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Tools for Schools program and the ongoing grant programs to improve indoor environmental quality in schools. We have seen through countless studies that poor indoor air quality can impede a child's learning ability and expose students and school personnel to serious health risks. Research has shown that indoor environmental exposure to pollutants can be more intense than outdoor exposures and that school facilities have been neglected for decades.

These are problems affecting children and their families/caretakers, particularly in communities most in need, and affecting personnel, the health care system, and schools themselves. Poor indoor environments in schools decrease seat time, attendance, and test scores, and increase asthma and other health events, and thus increase health costs. Funding helps to educate, train, and encourage schools and childcare facilities on child-safe and effective preventive management of facilities. Our children deserve the best possible chance to learn and succeed. Sometimes, that begins with safe facilities and access to clean infrastructure and utilities.

We must also continue to invest in the Superfund Cleanup program as it is responsible for cleaning up some of the nation's most contaminated land and responding to environmental emergencies, oil spills, and natural disasters. To protect public health and the environment, the Superfund program focuses on making a visible and lasting difference in communities, ensuring that people can live

and work in healthy, vibrant places. Revitalizing contaminated land improves the quality of life for communities around the United States and is part of the EPA's core mission. This work must continue by funding the program at $356 million to keep up with inflation and the increase in Superfund sites.

Finally, I urge your support for projects in my district that will improve the lives of Texans across the district. Investing in safe drinking water for Jacinto City will provide the replacement of 4624 feet of 10-inch supply lines and 13,519 feet of 8–inch distribution lines. These new polypropylene water mains will replace the 80-year-old ductile steel and cast-iron pipes currently in place. After 80 years of service, the existing pipes have become calcified, severely reducing the inside diameter of the pipe. This reduction lowers the water flow released by a fire hydrant, rendering them unusable by firefighters during emergencies. An added benefit to the project will be the validation of all lines connecting to the newly installed water mains to ensure that no copper or lead lines remain in use.

Additionally, an investment in a new satellite pollution control facility will benefit Harris County residents for decades to come. The project will undergo an evaluation of the optimal location for this new facility. In addition, the project will perform the necessary feasibility study, planning, and design work needed to move forward with the construction of the new facility. The project aims to create a state-of-the-art laboratory for perfluoroalkyl (PFAS)/perfluoro octane sulfonic acid (PFOS) water analysis testing. This facility will help Harris County meet pending US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requirements for qualifying industry compliance.

In addition, the project aims to improve environmental inspections and test pollution control efficiency throughout the County, leading to greater services for our residents. The current PCS laboratory location is in an evacuation zone and flood-prone area, thus not able to respond during mass evacuation events. Therefore, having an additional facility provides a much-needed backup for our region in the event of major disasters (storm surge, hurricanes, etc.), of which the region has seen a rise in over the recent years.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my written testimony. I look forward to working with all the Members of the Subcommittee in advancing these priorities that are not only important to my district but to working families, children, and taxpayers across our great nation.