



The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA.
Office of the President

February 14, 2022

The Honorable Raúl Grijalva
U.S. House of Representatives
Natural Resources Committee
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Grijalva,

It is with enthusiasm that I support the passage of H.R. 6654, the Climate Adaptation Science Centers Act (CASC Act).

Since 2012, the University of Oklahoma (OU) has hosted the South Central Climate Science Center (CASC) under the leadership of Dr. Renee McPherson and Dr. Berrien Moore III. During that time, OU has supported the South Central CASC with two faculty lines and one staff line, has elevated the CASC to the stature of University Strategic Organization (with associated annual funding), and has provided space for OU, Chickasaw Nation, and USGS employees of the CASC in one of our newest buildings on our award-winning research campus. Through senior leadership changes and difficult financial times, OU's support for the CASC has not wavered because its mission is of utmost importance to our state, region, and nation.

Oklahoma is no stranger to extremes in climate. Floods, droughts, severe storms, blizzards, dust storms, wildfires, and other hazards wreak havoc on our homes and businesses. The changing strength and frequency of these events place evermore demands on decision makers to keep our communities — and the ecosystems that support them — resilient. The South Central CASC works together with local decision makers to transfer the scientific knowledge from OU — the third largest weather and climate research and operations community in the U.S. — to aid in science-based climate adaptation. Its model of conducting actionable science is key to ensuring that governments are responsive to the needs of local managers and that knowledge is distributed equitably to those who need it.

The CASC partnership among the USGS, OU, and our consortium partners (Chickasaw Nation, Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, Oklahoma State University, Texas Tech University, Louisiana State University, and University of New Mexico) is a shining example of how the federal government demonstrates its leadership to solving grand challenges by working with regional thought leaders who are well networked and have a history of listening to local and regional needs. Yet in the past decade, there have been questions about the longevity of the USGS CASCs, delays in grant processing, and changes in how the CASCs can conduct education and outreach. In particular, the South Central CASC had to terminate its highly successful summer undergraduate internship program for traditionally underrepresented students and had to reduce the number of graduate research assistantship offers because of changes in Administrations. The CASC Act codifies what work can be done at the CASCs and streamlines the financial processes to mitigate delays.

Importantly, the CASC Act will demonstrate to the 39 Tribes in Oklahoma that the South Central CASC will transcend political whims. All CASCs are invested in building relationships of trust with Tribes. For example, the South Central CASC has employed six Native scientists (1 PhD, 3 Masters, 2



BS) and over 45 Native students during its short lifetime. It is a safe place to work together with federal and university scientists on climate challenges that are deeply important to Indigenous ways of life. The science produced by the CASC has aided Tribal nations in their drought management, climate adaptation, and hazard mitigation plans, and many other Tribes are seeking similar partnerships. It is critical that Congress provide the USGS with a long-term vision, through the CASC Act, that provides stability and consistency to the network to continue building these relationships.

In partnership with the USGS and other leaders, the University of Oklahoma is committed to delivering science to natural and cultural resource managers so that they can prepare for and respond to climate impacts. I strongly support the CASC Act and thank you for your leadership in introducing H.R. 6654.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph Harroz, Jr.", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Joseph Harroz, Jr.
President
The University of Oklahoma