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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515 - 3006

July 25, 2019

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

The Honorable Rob Bishop
Ranking Member
Committee on Natural Resources
U.S. House of Representatives
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jared Huffman
Chairman
Subcommittee on Water, Oceans,
and Wildlife
U.S. House of Representatives
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Tom McClintock
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Water, Oceans,
and Wildlife
U.S. House of Representatives
1324 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Grijalva, Ranking Member Bishop, Subcommittee Chairman Huffman, and
Subcommittee Ranking Member McClintock,

Thank you for holding today's legislative hearing to discuss my bill, H.R. 3115, the Living Shorelines Act of 2019. Now is an excellent time to make sure Congress is using all the tools at our disposal to protect coastal communities and ecosystems from the stress of increasing climate change effects and rampant environmental degradation.

As global heat increases, sea level rise and stronger hurricanes are forcing our coastal communities and economies to deal with increasingly damaging and costly flooding and erosion. Additionally, our coasts are also grappling with more downpours alternating with drought, water evaporation, acidification, and saltwater intrusion. When coupled with contamination due to regular agricultural, industrial and development activity, these threats cannot in good conscience be ignored. Collectively, they are a precursor to devastating biodiversity loss and the loss of the natural flood resilience benefits that coastal ecosystems provide to communities.

Fortunately, harnessing proven natural infrastructure solutions will help us protect communities and ecosystems along coasts, bays, and tributaries from these threats. Living shoreline projects use natural materials and systems, such as dunes, wetlands, and oyster reefs, to support the natural flood resilience of healthy shoreline ecosystems. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has researched living shorelines and already holds them up as an

innovative alternative to shoreline hardening to support pre-disaster planning when projects such as bulkheads or sea walls do not make sense.

According to NOAA, living shorelines provide unique benefits. For example, just 15 feet of marsh can absorb 50 percent of incoming wave energy providing extraordinary storm resilience. By trapping sediments from tidal waters, natural infrastructure can grow in elevation proving to be adaptable to sea level rise. Certain types of living shorelines can also support substantial carbon sequestration. One square mile of salt marsh stores the carbon equivalent of 76,000 gallons of gas annually. In addition, by boosting ecosystem functions, living shorelines support local economies and the environment by improving water quality and habitats for marine wildlife, as well as enhanced opportunities for recreation and tourism. This is important as NOAA predicts that 33 percent of U.S. shorelines will be hardened by the end of the century, decreasing fisheries habitat and biodiversity.

With this knowledge at hand, NOAA produced agency guidance so that federal employees can advise and support partnerships for living shorelines design and research. There is also a small amount of in-demand funding that can be made available to communities seeking a living shoreline among numerous other coastal management project types, but this funding is limited to support for technical assistance and design. As you can see, living shorelines are not a new concept, but without federal investment for implementation they will remain an underutilized solution to the nation's coastal issues.

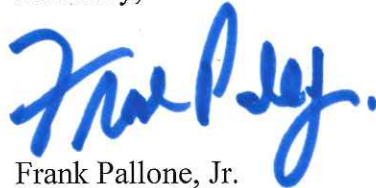
To this end, the Living Shorelines Act would create a federal grant program within NOAA to assist states, localities and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in constructing and restoring living shorelines. The projects would be monitored to measure and help determine best practices for future living shoreline projects, which will become even more important as climate change threats increase over time. The bill would give priority consideration to projects in areas where a federal disaster has been declared in the past 10 years or that have a history of flooding. My legislation provides \$50 million in federal funds that would be matched by state and local governments and NGOs applying for grants and projects, allowing communities to access the living shorelines' wide-ranging benefits, which they may not be able to afford on their own.

This is a small amount to begin a program that will provide outsized economic benefits. Due to their adaptability to changing environmental conditions and minimal maintenance over their life span, living shorelines are cost effective. NOAA has found that \$1 million invested in coastal restoration creates 17 jobs on average. Additionally, a Center for American Progress, Oxfam, and Abt Associates analysis found that for each taxpayer dollar invested in three coastal restoration projects funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, \$15 in net economic benefits were returned to the public on average.

Since Superstorm Sandy, we have invested hundreds of millions of dollars to make my home state of New Jersey more resilient against the effects of climate change. Coastal tourism, fishing, and boating are important New Jersey industries that must be protected. Living shorelines are exactly the type of innovative and resilient infrastructure coastal communities across the country should have available to them.

Together with its Senate companion, S. 1730, the Living Shorelines Act has the potential to significantly augment the protection and vibrancy of our nation's coastal communities and ecosystems by bringing a beneficial tool to the public. Again, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony as part of your consideration of H.R. 3115, the Living Shorelines Act of 2019. I look forward to working with the Committee to bring this critical new program to our nation's shores.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Frank Pallone, Jr.", with a stylized, cursive script.

Frank Pallone, Jr.

MEMBER OF CONGRESS