

(NOTE: You will have 5 minutes to speak)

### **06.09.21 Approps Member Day Testimony**

Thank you Chairwoman DeLauro, Ranking Member Granger, and members of the Committee for providing me the opportunity to testify today. I also want to extend a special nod of acknowledgement and thank my good friend and colleague from New Jersey. Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman for her outstanding work to represent and support our state's priorities on this Committee.

I want to speak today about a number of crucial projects I have submitted on behalf of my district and the communities and constituents I represent.

You've heard from and will continue to hear from a number of members today. Many, if not all, of us will be highlighting the community projects we've submitted for consideration by this committee.

For this committee, it may seem tedious. I assure you, no matter the size, scale, or issue area that these projects fall under -- they will be life-changing to the constituents we're here advocating on behalf of.

For every community the past year has been excruciatingly difficult. The pandemic, the economic fallout, the loss, the isolation, the change in daily routine. Kids barred from schools and families barred from seeing each other in the most troubling times many of us have ever faced.

Every part of this nation was hit hard. For New Jersey, though we were hit hardest and hit first. The impact hasn't been lost on those in my district. Whether it's the trauma of loss or loneliness, the financial hardship of a closed business or a lost job that threatens your housing security, or the uncertainty of what awaits on the other side of this crisis -- reopening and getting back to normal is going to be a challenge.

But we're well on our way to making that reopening a reality, and now is the time to be making the types of investments that will make us better and stronger than before.

Each of these project requests that I've submitted were chosen because they will make a significant difference in people's lives and livelihoods. That's what we as Members of Congress need to be doing more than anything right now -- finding ways to improve the lives of our constituents and the services in our communities to help ease our recovery and pave the way for a more resilient future.

I know that goal is at the heart of every one of you as well. Whether it's the American Rescue Plan, the infrastructure package we're negotiating, or these community projects I'm fighting for -- our priorities have been in the right place. And I want to extend my thanks to this Committee and the Members on it for the role they've played in helping to make that the case.

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Now with that goal in mind, let me name just a few of the projects I've submitted for consideration.

1. \$3 million for Morris Habitat for Humanity
2. Nearly \$300,000 for Suicide Prevention Services through the Mental Health Association of Essex and Morris County
3. \$250,000 for a Park Improvements Project in West Orange, specifically designed to enhance ADA accessibility and
4. Nearly \$650,000 in funding for the installation of new lights at a recreation complex in Totowa
5. \$250,000 for the replacement of a water main in Stanhope
6. \$3.1 million for the expansion of a collaborative childcare project through United Way of Northern New Jersey
7. More than \$135,000 for necessary traffic improvements in Morris Plains
8. \$255,000 for the replacement of lead pipes and service lines in Bloomfield Township
9. \$800,000 for a water system upgrade to improve the water system in Hopatcong
10. And finally, \$500,000 for the preconstruction engineering efforts for a flood mitigation project on the Peckman River

Some of the benefits of these projects speak for themselves. Improvements for clean drinking water and the replacement of lead pipes, aid for a project designed to protect communities, homes, and businesses from flooding, or traffic improvements that will increase pedestrian safety.

These aren't the flashiest projects Congress ever funds, but they are often the most impactful and there are always projects like these in our communities that need to be addressed.

And then there are those, whose importance may have reached crisis levels during the challenges of the past year. Aid to Habitat for Humanity that is housing those who may have lost everything during this pandemic and who I had the honor of joining as a volunteer on one of their builds just last month. Or a project to expand childcare services that will help rebuild New Jersey's early education and care sector when 71 percent of the family childcare providers in the state have been lost. Or, perhaps sadly the most life-saving, the expansion of suicide prevention services when we're experiencing a mental health crisis.

These are the types of projects we need to be funding right now and I'm deeply proud to be fighting for them here today. After such a tough year, in NJ-11, our communities and organizations have come together to lift each other up with such ingenuity, care, and resourcefulness. They need our support now more than ever.

I'm honored to help play a role in delivering it. Thank you to this committee for your work, tremendous leadership, and careful consideration of these requests that I am certain may make a life-changing impact in my district. Thank you to the staff on appropriations for the long nights, and extra attention given to offices for whom this process is new.

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Thank you, Chairwoman, and I yield back.