

Testimony of the Honorable Frank J. Mrvan, U.S. Representative, IN-01 House Appropriations
Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development May 17, 2022

I would like to thank Chairwoman Kaptur and Ranking Member Simpson for holding today's Member Day hearing. I appreciate the opportunity to engage with all members of this Subcommittee and advocate for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers projects that are essential to strengthening the economy of Northwest Indiana, the entire Midwest, and our nation.

I have the great honor and privilege of representing Indiana's First Congressional District. Our district serves as a center of vital road, rail, air, and port networks in the Great Lakes region and is home to major manufacturing industries. This infrastructure – in conjunction with our labor workforce and proximity to Chicago – enables our region to attract new commercial and residential interests and talent. Northwest Indiana is proud to have the largest concentration of steel production and the largest inland oil refinery in our country. These industries foster economic activity and provide good-paying, union jobs to thousands of workers in this district.

From maintaining the federal navigation depths of our commercial and recreational harbors to ensuring Northwest Indiana residents have clean drinking water, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Chicago District stands steadfast as an unparalleled federal partner in the effort to facilitate economic development and to promote environmental stewardship in Northwest Indiana. There is no doubt the projects under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers serve as an economic driver in Indiana's First Congressional District, and I am grateful for their missions in our region.

The Community Project Funding process demonstrates the constitutional prerogatives of the Legislative Branch, and I fully appreciate the attention this Subcommittee and its staff devote to reviewing Members' requests. It is important that we are provided the opportunity to exercise our constitutional authority to direct funding to our districts, and it is incumbent for us to submit project requests that are beyond reproach and focused on the criteria set forth by this Subcommittee.

For the First District of Indiana, I have asked this Subcommittee to appropriate \$10 million in Community Project Funding to the Corps' Construction account for the specific purpose of undertaking Environmental Infrastructure projects in the Calumet Region. I would note that the requested amount is equal to the Chicago District's demonstrated capability for Fiscal Year (FY) 2023. Authorized by Section 219 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1992 and subsequent laws, Environmental Infrastructure projects continue to have a transformational impact in my district, aiding local communities in making necessary, overdue improvements to water, sanitary sewer, and stormwater sewer infrastructure that directly impact the Great Lakes system. These projects also serve in a primarily industrial corridor in majority minority populations that are dealing with the legacy costs that are so common in the Midwest. These projects are indeed environmental, but I believe the investments have proven to attract capital and built an excitement and interest to attract new people and businesses to my district.

With respect to the appropriate transparency measures that this Subcommittee has put in place, I would emphasize for the Calumet Region Environmental Infrastructure that the evidence of local community support is overwhelming, with local sponsors consistently contributing 25 percent of their projects' costs. These projects provide a vital benefit to residents in our district

and attract new economic activity to our region. In partnership with the Chicago District, this cost-sharing approach serves as a model of federal-local cooperation and consistently delivers a strong track-record of proven results, included, but not limited to: sanitary sewer interceptors and lines that benefit residents by reducing backups and damages to homes; improved operations of local wastewater treatment facilities by eliminating inflow and infiltration of groundwater into sewer systems; and stormwater projects constructed in areas where no previous stormwater infrastructure existed to protect homeowners from costly flooding events. It is imperative that we build on such models of cooperation and continue to appropriately distribute federal assistance through the annual appropriations process to communities that are depending on our leadership.

Additionally, I have requested \$1 million and \$914,000 in Community Project Funding to support the Corps' operations and maintenance missions at the Michigan City Harbor and at the Burns Waterway Small Boat Harbor, in Portage, respectively. Given the First District's location along the south shore of Lake Michigan, recreational harbors have an integral role in the economic development plans for shoreline communities. Michigan City Harbor features prominently within the Washington Park complex that is home to the Michigan City Zoo and the city's publicly accessible lakefront, a 99-acre park that attracts visitors from the tri-state area. As important, Michigan City Harbor and its channel provide safe refuge for recreational boats traveling within southern Lake Michigan during adverse weather events. The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) maintains law enforcement and rescue vessels within the port; improving the navigable waterway within the harbor and channel will improve the USCG's access to and from the port to conduct its Homeland Security missions on Lake Michigan.

Similarly, Burns Waterway Small Boat Harbor supports economic development within the City of Portage driven by its proximity to Lake Michigan and the Indiana Dunes National

Park. The availability of this harbor allows the city to pursue commercial and recreational plans that tie into the waterway and the natural environment. Along with Michigan City Harbor, Burns Waterway Small Boat Harbor and its channel provide safe refuge for recreational boats traveling within southern Lake Michigan during adverse weather events as nearby commercial harbors such as Burns Waterway Harbor, Gary Harbor and Indiana Harbor do not have facilities for the protection of recreational boats during intense thunderstorms or other weather conditions that affect navigability within Lake Michigan. To the immediate south of both harbors, the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District is constructing its Double Track project, a \$649 million project with substantial investments made by the federal and state governments. The transit-oriented development along this rail line, which connects Portage and Michigan City, focuses upon the accessibility to Lake Michigan via multiple methods of transportation, including waterways. Requested funds will allow the Chicago District to address the needs of the Michigan City and Burns Waterway Small Boat Harbors within its authorized missions and will support Portage and Michigan City in their efforts to maximize economic development opportunities attracted to this region resulting from these federal investments.

In closing, Chairwoman Kaptur, Ranking Member Simpson, and all members of this Subcommittee, I thank you for your consideration and for the opportunity to share with you the importance of these worthwhile projects to Northwest Indiana. The work of this Subcommittee, and that of the House Appropriations Committee, leads to federal investments that have the power to transform the economies of local communities and improve the quality of life and place for those who entrust in us the responsibilities inherent of Members of Congress as we work in a collaborative and productive manner on behalf of all the American people.