Draft Utility Letter for the Clean Water Compliance and Affordability Act

DATE

THE HONORABLE [NAME OF SENATOR]

UNITED STATES SENATE

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

Dear [Senator Name]:

I am writing on behalf of [UTILITY NAME] to urge you to support [S. 2358], The Clean Water Compliance and Affordability Act. This bill ensures that the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Integrated Planning initiative to assist communities meet their regulatory obligations under the Clean Water Act (CWA) receives an opportunity to be effectively implemented.

EPA unveiled the Integrated Municipal Stormwater and Wastewater Planning Approach Framework (Framework) to help communities meet their regulatory obligations under the CWA in a prioritized and sustainable manner. Under the integrated planning approach, communities can create a realistic schedule of priority projects for wastewater and stormwater permit obligations to ensure available funds go to those projects yielding the greatest water quality benefit first.

Like many communities, [YOUR COMMUNITY] is dealing with major wastewater and stormwater challenges. [TALK ABOUT SPECIFIC ISSUES YOU ARE DEALING WITH IN YOUR COMMUNITY]. Taking an Integrated Planning approach to holistically look at all of these issues to create a timely and affordable plan would save [OUR COMMUNITY] millions of dollars. However, Integrated Planning has yet to implemented widely and become an established program.

S. 2358 would ensure that Integrated Planning moves forward by creating a new pilot program for 15 communities across the country to work with EPA to develop integrated plans that best meet each participating community’s particular needs. The pilot program would also encourage communities to pursue innovative and cost-effective approaches to meet the CWA standards and facilitate flexible compliance solutions by extending CWA permit terms up to 25 years for pilot communities with an approved integrated plan.

S. 2358 would also require EPA to provide an annual report each year for the first five years after enactment on the progress of the integrated planning effort. Requiring EPA to provide annual reports for the first five years will provide Congress, the public, and the clean water utility community with important information on the effectiveness of the integrated planning program and how it can be improved from year to year.

However, implementing the pilot program and related reporting requirement could be done in a much more effective manner if Congress also authorized additional, modest funding for EPA to implement the proposed legislation. The most direct beneficiaries of this funding would be the local communities participating in the pilot program, as well as the larger municipal clean water community as a whole that would gain valuable insights from the pilot studies and resulting EPA reports. For this reason, [UTILITY/COMMUNITY] recommends that S. 2358 include modest funding authorization to assist EPA in working with local communities on pilot projects.

As you well know, communities are under enormous financial pressure to maintain critical services for their residents, including education, fire and safety as well as critical public health infrastructure such as drinking water and clean water. An Integrated Planning approach to CWA obligations can potentially save ratepayers millions of dollars while focusing clean water investments in a way that ensures the greatest water-quality benefit.

For these reasons [UTILITY] asks that you support the passage of The Clean Water Compliance and Affordability Act.

Sincerely,

[NAME & SIGNATURE]