

April 25, 2023

The Honorable Dave Joyce, Chairman
The Honorable Henry Cuellar, Ranking Member
U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
H-307, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Joyce and Ranking Member Cuellar:

As you draft Fiscal Year 2024 legislation for the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security, the American Society of Civil Engineers urges you to provide robust funding to the agencies and programs that play a vital role in protecting the nation's public health, welfare, and security. From securing our nation to responding to disasters or working to mitigate the impact of disasters before they occur, the Department of Homeland Security is critical to ensuring our water resources infrastructure is safe and that infrastructure systems are built with resilience in mind.

ASCE's *2021 Infrastructure Report Card* rated the overall condition of our nation's infrastructure a cumulative grade of "C-," and while the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act will be a significant step forward in raising the grades, the full success of that legislation cannot be realized without Congress' continued commitment to the authorized levels set under the bill. Furthermore, as a nation, we must continue to dedicate funding to building smarter and stronger going forward. By funding programs that incentivize infrastructure owners to utilize new approaches, materials, and technologies to ensure our infrastructure is more resilient will be vital to developing infrastructure systems that can recover quickly from significant weather and other hazard events.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

ASCE strongly supports the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Program and urges the Subcommittee to provide at least \$500 million for the program in FY24. This program is a critical tool in helping state and local governments reduce their risk to future hazard events; not only does it fund pragmatic disaster risk management strategies that protect our nation's communities and safeguard infrastructure systems, but it is a prudent use of taxpayer dollars. In fact, a January 2018 National Institute of Building Sciences report found that every \$1 spent in federal government agency hazard mitigation saves the nation \$6 in future disaster costs. **ASCE also urges the Subcommittee to provide \$350 million for the Flood Hazard Mapping and Risk Analysis (RiskMAP) program, as well as \$8.758 million for the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program.**

Natural and man-made disasters have repeatedly demonstrated the vulnerability of the nation's infrastructure. The federal funding for mitigation, preparedness, research, and standards has been insufficient to provide the resources necessary for mitigating natural and man-made hazards. Such

funding is critical to the health and safety of the nation, its citizens, and to the resilience of the nation's critical infrastructure.

Dams and Levees

Our nation's over 92,000 dams and nearly 30,000 miles of levees are critical components of risk reduction and protect communities, critical infrastructure, and trillions of dollars in property. However, it is estimated that \$80 billion is needed over the current decade to maintain and improve the nation's levees, while the Association of State Dam Safety Officials recently estimated the cost of bringing the nation's dams into a state of good repair surpasses \$157 billion. At the current rate of investment, these repairs would take well over 50 years to complete. As such, *ASCE's 2021 Infrastructure Report Card* gave our nation's dams and levees each a grade of "D." Therefore, we urge the Subcommittee to support the following programs at their fully authorized FY24 levels:

- **National Levee Safety Program (PL 117 – 263 Sec. 8387) at \$25 million; and the**
- **High Hazard Potential Dam Rehabilitation Grant Program (PL 114 – 322 Sec. 5006) at \$60 million.**

The National Levee Safety Program has created an inventory of our nation's levees, which did not exist before Hurricane Katrina. In fact, we now know the location and condition of nearly 30,000 miles of levees; however, there is much work to be done to further inventory the thousands of miles of levees not yet in the database. The National Levee Safety Program was reauthorized in the Water Resources Development Act of 2022, however, since its inception, it has yet to receive any funding other than for the levee inventory.

Meanwhile, the High Hazard Potential Dam Rehabilitation Grant Program is the primary source of federal funds for repair and rehabilitation of high hazard potential dams, or those dams which, in the event of a dam failure, would result in the loss of life. The Association of State Dam Safety Officials (ASDSO) estimates that more than 2,300 high hazard potential dams are deficient due to a lack of investment in dam safety. Unfortunately, this critical grant program has been chronically underfunded, receiving only \$12 million of its \$60 million authorization in FY 2022, and not being funded at all in FY 2023.

Funding for these critical programs is necessary to protect the lives of communities that live behind levees, and downstream of high hazard potential dams nationwide. Additionally, investing in dam and levee safety could save billions in recovery funds in the event of a future levee breach or dam failure.

ASCE also strongly encourages the Homeland Security Subcommittee to include a multi-year reauthorization of the National Dam Safety Program (PL 115-270, Sec. 1163), which is set to expire on September 30, 2023. This should include an increased funding level of \$43 million.

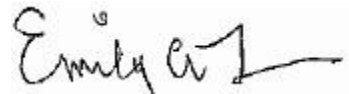
The National Dam Safety Program, first authorized in 1996 and last reauthorized in 2018, is the primary source of federal support for dam safety programs at the state level. The program supports state programs with resources for training, staffing needs, emergency planning, and dam inspection and monitoring activity. Like the High Hazard Potential Dam Rehabilitation Grant program, however, it too is annually underfunded, having only received \$9.7 million of its authorized \$13.9 million authorization. Both its funding and authorization levels are not nearly enough to keep up with the estimated \$157.6

billion cost of bringing the nation's dams into a state of good repair. It is critical that the National Dam Safety Program be reauthorized at a funding level that will adequately support the safety of dams nationwide.

In conclusion, ASCE believes our nation must prioritize the investment needs of our water resources infrastructure systems to ensure public safety, a strong economy, and the protection of our environmental resources.

We thank you for your consideration of our funding requests and look forward to working with the Subcommittee to fund these existing successful federal infrastructure programs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Emily A. Feenstra". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Emily A. Feenstra

Chief Policy & External Affairs Officer, American Society of Civil Engineers

cc: Chairwoman Kay Granger and Ranking Member Rosa DeLauro, House Committee on Appropriations