

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 16, 2016

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Tom Udall
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski and Ranking Member Udall:

When Americans go to the beach, they deserve to know that the water is safe. In order to provide this assurance, we write to urge you to fund the Beaches Environmental Assessment and Coastal Health (BEACH) Act grant program in Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 at \$9.549 million, the same level provided in FY 2016. This level of funding is below the program's ten-year average of approximately \$9.8 million. Since the BEACH Act became law in 2000, water quality testing grants have benefitted coastal communities from New Jersey to Oregon, Maine to Florida, and the Great Lakes to the Gulf Coast.

America's beaches and lakeshores are some of our country's greatest natural resources, hosting over 100 million visitors each year. Families across the country look forward to beach vacations and expect that it is safe to go in the water. BEACH Act grants allow States to protect the safety of these visitors by conducting water quality tests, posting warning signs, or even closing beaches when bacteria levels indicate the water is too contaminated.


Swimming in polluted water exposes people to pathogens that can cause gastrointestinal illness, skin rashes, and ear, eye, and staph infections. The elimination of these BEACH Act grant funds would likely result in a reduction of information about these important public health concerns. It would also put at risk the nation's \$100 billion coastal tourism and recreation sectors, which are driven by public confidence in healthy beaches.

Since the BEACH Act was enacted in 2000, the frequency of water quality monitoring has increased nationwide, helping States and localities identify the scope of contamination and improve public safety. Through this program, the Environmental Protection Agency has made nearly \$150 million available for BEACH Act grants. Thousands of beaches have been monitored through this program, making BEACH Act grants a cost-effective way to keep our constituents and visitors to our communities safe.

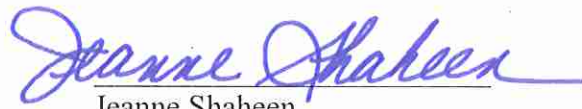
We all share the goal of protecting the health of swimmers and other recreational water users. Without adequate funding, many States will eliminate or significantly curtail their beach water quality monitoring programs. With over 20,000 beach closures and advisories issued every year, funding for beach monitoring is as critical as ever.

Sincerely,


Robert Menendez
United States Senator


Bill Nelson
United States Senator

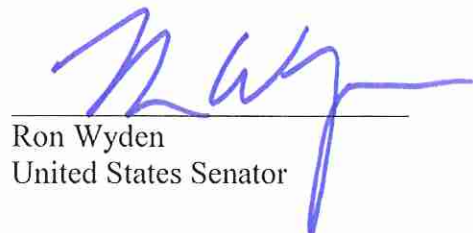

Jeffrey A. Merkley
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United States Senator

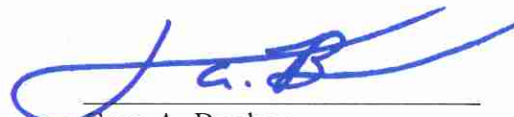

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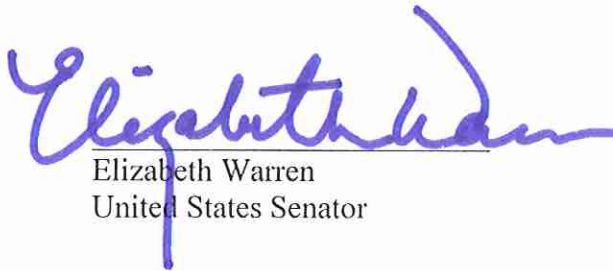

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



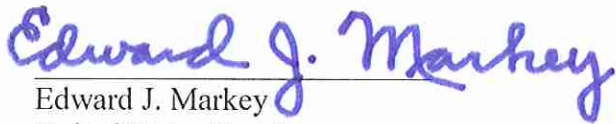
Barbara Boxer
United States Senator



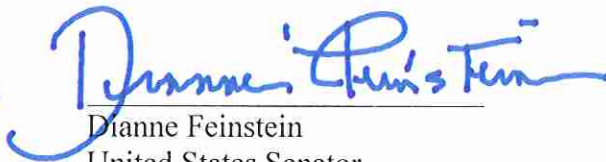
Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



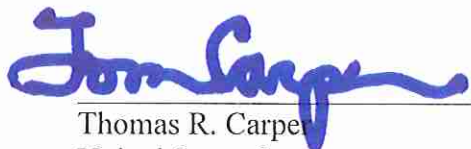
Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



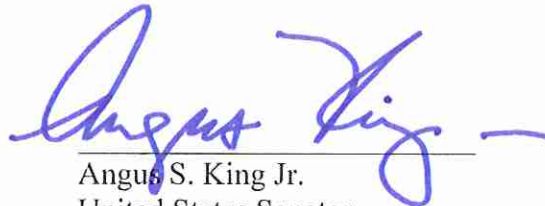
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



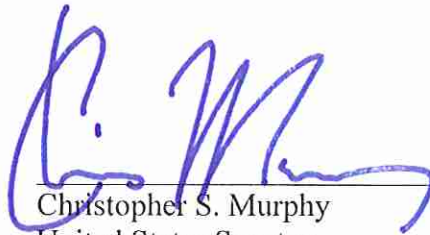
Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



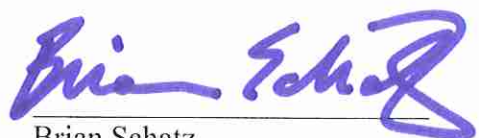
Angus S. King Jr.
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Gary C. Peters
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