

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

March 17, 2020

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-128, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
Senate Committee on Appropriations
S-128, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Marcy Kaptur
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mike Simpson
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy and Water
House Committee on Appropriations
H-307, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Feinstein, Chairwoman Kaptur and Ranking Member Simpson,

We are writing to thank you for your support for the Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC) and to request continued investment in the program in Fiscal Year (FY) 2021. Investments from the NBRC have significantly improved the infrastructure and quality of life in rural parts of our states, spurring job creation, economic growth and community development. Given its demonstrated record of success, we encourage you to include \$30 million for the NBRC in the FY 2021 Energy and Water (E&W) Development appropriations bill, with an allocation of \$4 million to address the decline in forest-based economies throughout the region and \$1.25 million for the State Capacity Building Grant Program. This continued investment would greatly benefit economic development in the Northern Forest region.

Established in the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (P.L. 110-234), the NBRC is a federal-state partnership that provides infrastructure and economic development assistance to 60 rural counties in New Hampshire, Vermont, New York and Maine. Since its creation, the NBRC partnership has invested more than \$55 million in 248 projects that have helped to create jobs, reduce poverty and unemployment and limit outmigration in Northern Forest communities. These investments have leveraged more than \$142 million in other public and private funds. In the last year alone, the Commission supported 45 projects, including efforts to provide education and workforce training, promote tourism and modernize critical infrastructure in the region. In addition, the NBRC provides assistance to states in creating comprehensive economic development plans that incorporate the resources and input of local governments and the general public to identify high-need project areas.

As you know, the Commission has repeatedly received overwhelming bipartisan support in Congress through robust appropriations and reauthorization of the program. Through the Agricultural Improvement Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-334), Congress extended the authorization of the NBRC for an additional five years, increased the appropriations authorization for the program, expanded its reach to additional counties throughout the region and established the State Capacity Building Grant Program, a new program to help develop projects that support business retention and expansion, access to high-speed broadband, critical infrastructure development and job creation throughout the region. Moreover, in the Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020 (P.L. 116-94), Congress included \$25 million for the NBRC, including \$750,000 for the State Capacity Building Grant Program.

While the Commission has made great progress promoting economic development and job growth in our communities, continued federal investment in the NBRC is critical to sustaining its efforts. Many Northern Forest communities still experience economic distress and as communities learn of the work that is being accomplished by the Commission, competition for the funding continues to grow. In 2019, more than 150 applications were filed for NBRC grant funds, a significant increase from the 91 applications filed in 2018.

Given this demand, we strongly oppose the Trump Administration's FY 2021 Budget proposal, which eliminated funding for the NBRC. The NBRC has served as a successful resource for innovative and entrepreneurial projects. Eliminating funding for the Commission would have a negative effect on communities in need and stifle opportunities for future development. The NBRC is a strategic use of taxpayer dollars and leverages significant private capital for projects in our states. It is clear that we need to be encouraging economic and community development, and we commend the work of the subcommittees for previous support to this vital program.

We appreciate your consideration of this important request and look forward to working together on this important program.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Elise Stefanik
Member of Congress



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



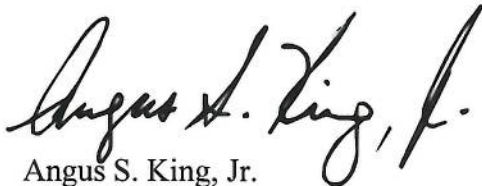
Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Chris Pappas
Member of Congress



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Jared Golden
Member of Congress



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Peter Welch
Member of Congress



Antonio Delgado
Member of Congress



Paul Tonko
Member of Congress



Anthony Brindisi
Member of Congress

John Katko
Member of Congress