

November 21, 2019

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The Honorable Nita Lowey
House Appropriations Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Senate Appropriations Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative Lowey and Senator Shelby:

On behalf of the National Association of Clean Air Agencies (NACAA)* we are writing to you regarding the deliberations between the House and Senate regarding appropriations legislation that includes the budget for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for fiscal year (FY) 2020. Specifically, NACAA is concerned about grants for state and local air pollution control agencies under Sections 103 and 105 of the Clean Air Act (CAA), which are part of the State and Tribal Assistance Grant (STAG) program. **We urge Congress to include in the final FY 2020 appropriations legislation the higher amount for this grant program that is contained in the House bill (\$238.2 million).**

The version of H.R. 3055 that the U.S. House of Representatives adopted calls for \$238.2 million for grants for state and local air pollution control agencies, while the Senate bill would provide \$220.8 million. When adjusted for last year's rescissions, the Senate amount constitutes level funding from FY 2019. NACAA's recommendation for FY 2020 was for Congress to increase state and local air grants by \$82 million above FY 2019 levels, for a total of \$310 million. Federal grants to state and local air quality agencies are the same now as they were 15 years ago in FY 2004 – \$228 million. If the FY 2004 figure is adjusted for inflation, NACAA's recommended amount of \$310 million would be equivalent to level funding.

While we recognize that funding at the level we have recommended likely will not be possible for FY 2020, we ask you to incorporate into the final legislation the higher amount for state and local air quality grants contained in the House appropriations bill (\$238.2 million). Although the \$10-million increase in

* NACAA is a national, non-partisan, non-profit association of state and local air pollution control agencies in 41 states, including 114 locals, the District of Columbia and four territories.

the House bill is far less than what is necessary for state and local air quality agencies to carry out their many important responsibilities under the Clean Air Act, the additional funds will alleviate some of the shortfall state and local agencies are experiencing.

Federal grants for state and local air quality agencies have been inadequate for many years. Nationwide, federal grants support merely 25 percent of state and local air quality programs, even though the Clean Air Act envisions federal funding of up to 60 percent. Moreover, the grants have not kept up with inflation and our responsibilities and costs have increased. Because of these deficits, state and local agencies struggle to continue critical air quality programs.

State and local air quality agencies must carry out numerous programs required by the federal Clean Air Act. The increased funding we have recommended would be used for a variety of activities, depending on the highest-priority needs in each area. These would include ensuring strong air quality monitoring networks, eliminating clean air planning backlogs, compiling emission inventories, adopting regulations, analyzing data, undertaking compliance assurance and supporting the needs of regulated industries by issuing high-quality permits efficiently.

As you are aware, air pollution remains a serious public health problem in this country. It causes tens of thousands of premature deaths and millions of cases of adverse health impacts annually, including cancer and damage to respiratory, cardiovascular, neurological and reproductive systems. Therefore, it is critically important that state and local air quality agencies be funded at levels that will help us to accomplish our mission. While full funding may not be feasible this year, we ask that you at least provide the higher amount for state and local air quality grants included in the House bill (\$238.2 million).

Thank you for your assistance. If we can provide additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us or Mary Sullivan Douglas of NACAA at (202) 624-7864 or mdouglas@4cleanair.org.

Sincerely,



Rick Brunetti
Kansas
NACAA Co-President



Charlene Albee
Reno, Nevada
NACAA Co-President

cc: Members of the House Appropriations Committee
Members of the Senate Appropriations Committee