

March 13, 2018

Dear Senators and Representatives,

As concerned constituents who work in and around New York's ocean and coastal environment, we write requesting your support for robust funding for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

NOAA's mission, to understand, protect, restore, and manage our ocean, coasts, and Great Lakes, is vitally important to sustain these resources and our economy. The New York's ocean and Great Lakes economy contributes over \$24 billion annually to the state's GDP and supports nearly 350,000 jobs. While much of the U.S. ocean is under federal jurisdiction, many of NOAA's programs focus on pushing resources and decision-making power out to regions, states and communities like ours.

With the release of "An American Budget" on February 12, 2018, the Trump Administration proposed eliminating or slashing vital NOAA grants and programs. The Fiscal Year 2019 (FY19) budget proposal would slash over \$1 billion from NOAA, harming our nation's ocean and coastal economy and environment.

The FY19 NOAA budget proposal does not meet the needs of ocean and coastal communities, businesses, or the environment. We ask that you ensure no such budget becomes a reality for our nation's premier ocean agency. We urge you to maintain funding for NOAA at or above current levels.

We work to build a thriving coastal economy, and partnerships with NOAA are key to that. And it's working. In recent years, marine mammal populations have been returning to New York Harbor and adjacent waters—thanks to cleaner water—driving growth of tour operators, who provide whale watch services to hundreds and thousands of tourists each year. NOAA also works with New York as part of a regional effort to ensure long-term resiliency and success of our coastal and marine environment.

Losing funding for just one critical ocean program could have ripple effects across other programs and our state. Just a few of the proposed changes we are concerned about include:

- Eliminating Coastal Zone Management grants and Regional Coastal Resilience grants, and drastically reducing funding to others, like the Ocean Acidification program. New York businesses ranging from tourism to aquaculture rely on the support of and partnerships with these programs. In New York, the clean ocean economy of tourism/recreation and fishing supports 300,000 jobs and \$21 billion in GDP.
- Elimination of National Sea Grant College Program, which trains the next generation of leaders in marine science and policy. This also impairs our ability to innovate in the face of the challenges. Consider, for example, the thousands of students involved in the Billion Oyster Project to rebuild oyster reefs in NYC that will help restore marine habitat and help protect shorelines from storm damage.
- Cuts to Protected Resources, the John H. Prescott Marine Mammal Rescue Program, scientific research, and other related programs. This would impact our marine mammal researchers working to understand and protect whales in New York Harbor, and impact the ability for first responders to aid marine mammals in times of need.

- Cuts for joint enforcement agreements. Fishermen on the water, as well as New York’s entire seafood supply chain, rely on the development of —and fair enforcement of— rules that ensure sustainable fisheries.

We ask that you also consider the balance between NOAA’s oceanic and atmospheric missions, and the nexus between the two. Americans should not have to choose between weather satellites on the one hand, and ocean and coastal resources like healthy marine populations and sustainable fisheries, on the other. We need to understand both our atmosphere and our ocean -- and they are intimately connected. For example, ocean observations and monitoring provide critical information for severe storm tracking and weather forecasting. And ocean programs facilitate homeland security and national defense functions, including U.S. Navy operations and U.S. Coast Guard search and rescue.

We urge Congress to fund NOAA at current levels or higher in FY19 and to prioritize investments in ocean, coastal, and fisheries programs.

Signed,

Ayana Elizabeth Johnson, Ph.D., founder and president, Ocean Collectiv

Nikita Scott, chair, Surfrider Foundation, NYC

Marquise Stillwell, founder and principal, Openbox

Murray Fisher, founder, New York Harbor School and Billion Oyster Project