

The Honorable Tom Carper
Chairman, Environment and Public Works Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lindsay Graham
Member, Environment and Public Works Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

December 5, 2022

Dear Chairman Carper and Senator Graham:

We are writing in support of the Strengthening Coastal Communities Act of 2022. Our members represent fiscal conservatives, taxpayers, insurance industry leaders, state officials, environmentalists, and outdoor recreationists. We commend your leadership in introducing this important bill, which would save taxpayer dollars, help protect coastal communities from storm and hurricane damages, and better conserve the coastal environment.

The Strengthening Coastal Communities Act of 2022 would expand and modernize the Coastal Barrier Resources Act (CBRA). Signed into law by President Ronald Reagan in 1982, and subsequently expanded by Democrat and Republican-led Congresses, the CBRA is a bipartisan success story. The CBRA uses a free market approach to achieve public safety, conservation, and fiscal goals by removing the taxpayer from the role of funding coastal construction. By prohibiting most federal expenditures in areas included in the CBRA System, the CBRA program has saved the federal taxpayer roughly \$9.5 billion and is on track to save billions more.

The CBRA system includes 3.5 million acres of barrier islands, beaches, and wetlands along the Gulf of Mexico, Atlantic Ocean, Great Lakes, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. These areas provide important habitat for wildlife, including fish and shellfish that support the nation's multi-billion-dollar fishing industry. Undeveloped coastal areas also act like nature's "speed bumps," absorbing impacts from storms and hurricanes and helping shield upland communities from damage. Undeveloped coastal areas along the mid-Atlantic coast helped to prevent more than \$625 million worth of additional damage from the 2012 Hurricane Sandy.

To increase benefits to public safety, the taxpayer, and the environment, the Strengthening Coastal Communities Act of 2022 would:

- Enlarge the CBRA System by adding more than 277,000 acres along the coasts of the nine states most impacted by Hurricane Sandy (NH, MA, RI, CT, NY, NJ, DE, MD, and VA.) The Department of Interior recommended to Congress in April 2022 that these areas be added to the CBRA system after years of careful review and public input.

- Expand the areas eligible for inclusion in the CBRA System to include additional coastal landforms and habitats that help protect coastal communities, such as rocky bluffs and spits of land.
- Help address new climate change threats to our coasts and promote future climate resiliency by directing the Department of the Interior, along with other federal and state agencies, to identify coastal areas that could provide habitat and storm-buffering benefits as sea levels rise, and develop ways to include these valuable areas in the CBRA system.

The Coastal Barrier Resources Act has a proven track record of saving money, protecting important habitat, and shielding upland communities from deadly storms. We applaud the introduction of the Strengthening Coastal Communities Act of 2022 and strongly support its prompt passage.

Sincerely,

Brian Moore
Vice President of Coastal Policy
National Audubon Society

Chad Berginnis
Executive Director
Association of State Floodplain Managers

Steve Ellis
President
Taxpayers for Common Sense

Marla J. Stelk
Executive Director
National Association of Wetland Managers

Jerry Theodorou
Director, Finance, Insurance & Trade
Program
R Street Institute

Christy Plumer
Chief Conservation Officer
Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership

Franklin Nutter
President
Reinsurance Association of America

Jessie Ritter
Director of Water Resources and Coastal Policy
National Wildlife Federation

Tim Dillingham
Executive Director
American Littoral Society

Andrew Hutson
Executive Director
Audubon North Carolina

Joel Scata
Water and Climate Attorney
Natural Resources Defense Council

Julia Dietz
Policy Director
Audubon South Carolina

Jim Brown
Director of Policy
Audubon Mid-Atlantic

Mike Burger
Executive Director
Audubon Connecticut & New York

Audrey DeRose-Wilson
Director of Bird Conservation
Audubon Florida

Manley Fuller
Vice President of Conservation Policy
North Carolina Wildlife Federation

Sierra Weaver
Coast & Wetlands Program Leader
Southern Environmental Law Center

Jonathan Stone
Executive Director
Save The Bay (RI)

Maggie Ostdahl
Conservation Policy Manager
National Aquarium (Baltimore)

Stacy Ortega
Coastal Policy Manager
Louisiana Wildlife Federation

Steve Holmer
Vice President of Policy
American Bird Conservancy

Stefanie Sekich
Senior Manager, Coast and Climate Initiative
Surfrider Foundation

Colette Buchanan
President
Monmouth County (NJ) Audubon Society

Ken Cohen
President
Prince George's (MD) Audubon Society

Hugh Simmons
President
Chesapeake Audubon Society

Bob Lukinic
Conservation Chair
Southern Maryland Audubon

Robin G. Todd, PhD.
Chair, Conservation Committee
Maryland Ornithological Society