

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 26, 2013

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, & Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior,
Environment, & Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Reed and Ranking Member Murkowski:

Americans deserve to know that the water is safe when they go to the beach. In order to provide this assurance, we write to urge you to fund the BEACH Act grant program in FY 2014 at FY 2012 enacted levels of approximately \$9.9 million. Since the BEACH Act became law in 2000, water quality testing grants have benefitted coastal communities from New Jersey to California, 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. 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 conduct water quality tests and post warning signs, or even close beaches, when bacteria levels indicate the water is too contaminated.

The grants also help state governments develop and implement programs to inform the public about the risk of exposure to disease-causing microorganisms in the water at our nation's beaches. 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 will likely result in a reduction of information about these important public health concerns.

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 more than \$111 million available for BEACH Act grants. As a result, the number of monitored beaches more than tripled to more than 3,600 in 2010.

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 24,091 beach closures and advisories last year, funding for beach monitoring is as critical as ever.

Sincerely,


FRANK R. LAUTENBERG


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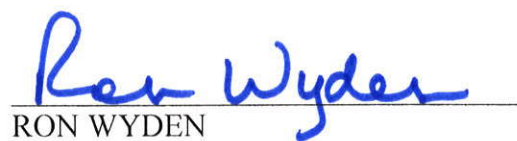

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