

Strengthening Civic Infrastructure as We Address Surface Transportation and Water Infrastructure

July 1, 2021

The Honorable Peter DeFazio, Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank Pallone Jr., Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman DeFazio and Chairman Pallone,

We write to express our support for provisions in H.R. 3684, the *INVEST in America Act of 2021* that will bolster community and civic structures that ensure all communities across America, especially those disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, can rebuild, engage, and thrive.

We are co-chairs and co-founders of the Nonprofit Infrastructure Investment Advocacy Group (NIIAG), a coalition of over 50 organizations that supports policies recognizing the essential role community and civic infrastructure plays in meeting the challenges of the public health and economic crisis unleashed by COVID-19. Nonprofit organizations have played a critical role in responding to this crisis, and key provisions in your legislation will help them further contribute to uplifting communities in the months and years to come. We are grateful that the *INVEST in America Act of 2021* addresses certain priorities outlined in the most recent [NIIAG policy agenda](#) and we urge you to include these provisions as the legislation moves forward.

Specifically, we write to express our support for provisions that advance:

- **Clean, healthy transit** – Transit plays an important role in keeping people safe during the pandemic, fighting climate change, and improving public health. For nonprofits, it is also fundamental to allowing those in need to access essential charitable services. Without a vibrant transit system, the most vulnerable individuals – including people who are disabled or elderly – may be stranded and unable to reach available lifelines. The legislation provides \$109 billion for transit, including a more than 50% increase in rural transit, increased investment in zero-emissions transit vehicles, and a focus on low-income and underserved communities.
- **Reconnecting communities** – Some past transportation investments divided communities or left out the people most in need of affordable transportation options. Instead of lifting up the vulnerable, federal dollars were spent in a way that damaged their health and economic prospects. The legislation provides \$3 billion for a new federal program to identify and remediate these harmful mistakes. Eligible public entities may partner with universities (including historically black colleges and universities) and other nonprofits for planning and public engagement.
- **Safe drinking water** – Nonprofits are not able to improve lives and communities if those we serve are not able to meet their most basic needs, such as clean water. In recent years, our nation has seen the devastating impact of polluted and unsafe water, and nonprofit organizations have confronted the immense health, economic, and social consequences of these failures. We applaud the legislation for authorizing \$53 billion for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, \$45 billion for lead service line replacement, and \$5 billion for PFAS water treatment grants.

While we are extremely grateful for these provisions, we believe that other investments in civic and community infrastructure are equally important – investments like broadband access, workforce development, child care, national service, the volunteer force, parks and recreation, and much more. While those investments may be

beyond the scope of this legislation or beyond the jurisdiction of your committees, we hope to work with you and any other policymaker to advance them in forthcoming infrastructure or reconciliation legislation.

We thank you for the work that you and your colleagues continue to do to make sure our nation rebuilds from this crisis, especially communities of color and Indigenous communities, in ways that make us better than before. Nonprofit organizations are an indispensable and trusted partner in this work. That is why we support these provisions and ask you to work for their enactment.

Nonprofits need these tools to go about the business of rebuilding our future, and we need your help.

Sincerely,

Independent Sector
Co-founder and Co-chair
Nonprofit Infrastructure Investment Advocacy Group

KABOOM!
Co-founder and Co-chair
Nonprofit Infrastructure Investment Advocacy Group