

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 6, 2024

The Honorable Sam Graves  
Chairman  
Committee on Transportation  
& Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Transportation  
& Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larsen,

We write to you to express our strong support for the *Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Act of 2024* (H.R. 7257). As two Great Lakes members of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, we urge the Committee to consider this bipartisan legislation before the conclusion of the 118th Congress.

The Great Lakes—including Lakes Superior, Michigan, Huron, Erie, and Ontario—are a critical natural resource. These lakes and their connecting channels create the largest fresh surface water system on Earth, constituting nearly one-fifth of the world’s freshwater supply and nine-tenths of the U.S.’s supply.<sup>1</sup> In addition to supplying fresh water, the Great Lakes are essential to the U.S. economy, creating \$3.1 trillion in gross domestic product and employing 25.8 million jobs.<sup>2</sup> Ultimately, the Great Lakes are an economic powerhouse and a way of life for our constituents and those who come from afar to enjoy our region’s recreational opportunities.

The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) has long enjoyed bipartisan support to ensure the preservation of the Great Lakes, as well as the public health of neighboring communities. GLRI is a collaborative effort to address the most significant threats to the Great Lakes ecosystem. The multi-agency endeavor aims to ensure safe water for recreational and drinking uses; the delisting of areas of concern; the elimination of invasive species, including harmful algal blooms; and the protection or restoration of native habitats. H.R. 7257 would reauthorize GLRI—which is currently set to expire in Fiscal Year 2026—through Fiscal Year 2031. The legislation would additionally expand GLRI’s authorization level from \$475 million to \$500 million. This program has proven to be an effective use of taxpayer dollars—as every dollar of GLRI funding results in approximately \$3.35 in economic activity—while ensuring the stewardship of the Great Lakes.<sup>3</sup>

The federal government—through GLRI—must work with state and local leaders to develop thoughtful, lasting conservation strategies to ensure the environmental and economic well-being of the Great Lakes. Should GLRI not be authorized, the Great Lakes Region—spanning Illinois,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.glc.org/lakes/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://coast.noaa.gov/states/fast-facts/great-lakes.html>

<sup>3</sup> Id.

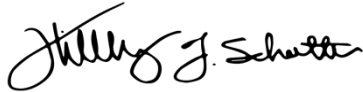
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Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin—will be harmed with threats to its recreational economy and water supply.

Given GLRI's success and long-standing congressional support, we urge the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure to mark up and favorably report H.R. 7257. As members of the Committee, we stand ready to support the measure. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



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Hillary J. Scholten  
Member of Congress



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Pete Stauber  
Member of Congress