



November 15, 2021

The Honorable Kathy Castor
Chair
U.S. House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis
H2-359 Ford House Office Building
Washington D.C. 20515

The Honorable Garret Graves
Ranking Member
U.S. House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis
H2-359 Ford House Office Building
Washington D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Castor, Ranking Member Graves, and Members of the Committee:

We are writing to commend the valuable work of the Select Committee on the Climate Crisis and to encourage you to continue to assess and address the national actions needed to respond to the significant threats that more severe storms and rising sea level pose for millions of Americans living along the nation's coasts.

The Select Committee took a critical step when it held, on May 7th of this year, a briefing on new research that warns of the potential for "rapid and unstoppable sea-level rise" if the world fails to limit global warming to less than 2 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels. This research and other studies point with high confidence to between three to four feet of sea level rise along the American coast by 2100 and indicate that sea level rise of six to eight feet is possible by that date. Seas will continue to rise after 2100 for several centuries. More severe coastal storms, also attributable to climate change, will add more extensive temporary flooding to the permanent inundation due to rising seas.

We are encouraged by the recent enactment of the bipartisan infrastructure legislation and proposed elements of reconciliation legislation that could improve coastal resiliency and adaptation efforts. We hope the House Select Committee will continue to highlight how Congress can further bolster such efforts through passage of legislation that provides long-term solutions to the challenges of sea level rise and other impacts of climate change.

The Select Committee can build on its valuable work to date by helping to strengthen national leadership in responding to the risks that rising sea level poses to the coast. We suggest that the Select Committee consider the following steps:

- 1. Hold a “Roundtable” on Sea Level Rise:** The “roundtable” format used by the Select Committee to gather information and hear from diverse interests in different parts of the country about key topics related to the climate crisis could make important contributions to understanding of sea level rise risks, impacts, and needed response actions. We recommend that the Select Committee hold one or more “roundtables” focused on hearing suggestions for measures that federal government should take to help state, local, tribal, and territorial governments be better prepared for rising seas and more severe storms.

- 2. Identify Sea Level Rise as a Select Committee Issue:** The Select Committee website is a valuable tool for building public understanding of the climate crisis and needed response actions. We recommend that the Select Committee add “Sea Level Rise” as an “issue” identified on the Select Committee website and provide background information concerning the impacts of a rising sea and the measures needed to address these impacts. For example, the Select Committee is proposing a range of actions that will support adapting to more severe storms and rising seas including:
 - improving disclosure of flood risk;
 - strengthening the National Flood Insurance Program;
 - promoting nature-based solutions to coastal flood risks;
 - protecting coastal ecosystems such as wetlands and marshes from the impacts of more severe storms and rising seas;
 - expanding funding for coastal programs, such as the Coastal Zone Management Program; and
 - addressing the needs of disadvantaged people and communities at risk of storm flooding and rising seas.

Building on these proposed actions with ideas that may be suggested at a roundtable on measures needed to address more severe coastal storms and rising seas would establish a compelling agenda for the future.

- 3. Communicate Importance of Legislation Intended to Address More Severe Coastal Storms and Rising Seas:** Since the beginning of this year, several bills have been introduced in the House of Representatives that propose important actions to adapt to the challenges that more severe storms and rising sea levels pose for coastal communities.

In addition, we encourage the Select Committee to highlight the need for legislation that addresses coastal flood resilience and sea level rise. Attached is a summary of relevant legislation that has been introduced in this Congress. This list does not communicate our coalition's formal endorsement of these bills but is provided to show that there is growing interest from members of the House of Representatives for acting to address sea level rise.

The *Coastal Flood Resilience Project* is a coalition of organizations and individuals working for stronger programs to prepare the United States for the more severe coastal storms and rising sea level resulting from a changing climate. Recommended policies and programs to respond to coastal storm risks and rising seas are described in a *Policy Agenda* and supporting white papers on our website (<https://www.cfrp.info/>).

We look forward to supporting the important work of the Select Committee.

Sincerely,

- Harriet Festing and Stephen Eisenman; Anthropocene Alliance
- Jean Flemma; Urban Ocean Lab
- Rob Moore; Director, Water & Climate Team, Natural Resources Defense Council
- Jeffrey Peterson; author of *A New Coast: Strategies for Responding to Devastating Storms and Rising Seas* and former Deputy Associate Director for Water, White House Council on Environmental Quality
- Susan Ruffo; United Nations Foundation and former Associate Director for Climate Preparedness and Resilience, White House Council on Environmental Quality
- Jason Scorse; Middlebury Center for the Blue Economy
- Stefanie Sekich-Quinn; Surfrider Foundation
- Shana Udvardy; Union of Concerned Scientists

Attachment: Brief Description of Bills

Attachment

Description of Coastal Flood Resilience Bills

1. **H.R. 3764; the Ocean-Based Climate Solutions Act;** authorizing diverse programs to make coastal communities more resilient; and to provide for the conservation and restoration of ocean and coastal habitats, biodiversity, and marine mammal and fish populations
2. **H.R. 2570; the Climate Risk Disclosure Act of 2021;** requiring the Securities and Exchange Commission to require corporations to annually disclose information regarding climate change-related risks, including strategies and actions to mitigate these risks
3. **H.R. 3228; the National Coastal Resilience Data and Services Act;** directing the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, to improve science, data, and services that enable sound decision making in response to coastal flood risk, including impacts of sea level rise, storm events, changing Great Lakes water levels, and land subsidence
4. **H.R. 2632; the Build for Future Disasters Act of 2021;** eliminating National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) rate subsidies for newly constructed property
5. **H.R. 481; the Flood Resiliency and Taxpayers Savings Act of 2021;** enacting key provisions of the Federal Flood Risk Management Standard
6. **H.R. 2872; the SAFE Act;** requires the President to establish an interagency National Fish, Wildlife, and Plants Climate Adaptation Strategy Working Group and address the effects of extreme weather and climate change on fish, wildlife, and plants
7. **H.R. 744; the FEMA Climate Change Preparedness Act;** requires the FEMA to revise its 2018-2022 Strategic Plan to ensure that the plan explicitly mentions climate change and addresses the implications of climate change on national disaster risk
8. **H.R. 1963; the Climate Resilient Communities Act;** requiring the government Accountability Office to report to Congress on the use of model, consensus-based building codes, standards, and provisions that support resilience to climate risks and impacts
9. **H.R. 4235; the Living Shorelines Act;** authorizing grants to certain entities for purposes of carrying out climate-resilient living shoreline projects that protect coastal communities
10. **H.R. 2534; the Climate Stewardship Act of 2021;** establishing a Coastal and Estuary Resilience Grant Program
11. **H.R. 5477; Federal Agency Climate PREP Act,** providing for expanded coordination among federal agencies in preparing for climate change