

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3812

WASHINGTON OFFICE
1717 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-3731

SELINGSGROVE OFFICE
713 BRIDGE STREET, ROOM 29
SELINGSGROVE, PA 17870
(570) 374-9469

TUNKHANNOCK OFFICE
181 WEST TIOGA STREET, SUITE 2
TUNKHANNOCK, PA 18657
(570) 998-6550

WILLIAMSPORT OFFICE
1020 COMMERCE PARK DRIVE, SUITE 1A
WILLIAMSPORT, PA 17701
(570) 322-3961

August 13, 2019

Ms. Linda Cruz-Carnall
Regional Director
Economic Development Administration
Robert N.C. Nix Federal Building
900 Market Street, Room 602
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Dear Ms. Cruz-Carnall,

I am writing on behalf of Lycoming County, Pennsylvania, which has recently applied to EDA's Public Works program for grant funding to upgrade critical components of the Greater Williamsport Levee. The Levee is the second-largest flood control system of its kind in the Commonwealth, and ensuring its integrity is one of the top infrastructure priorities for north-central PA communities that depend on protection from catastrophic flooding and sharply higher insurance costs. Prospects for long-term regional growth, investment and job creation are closely tied to the success of this project, and to that end I would like to express my strong support.

The \$2.2 million EDA contribution sought by Lycoming County would replace the Levee's failing cross pipes and unstable I-Wall at structurally vital points along US Route 15, a small but important part of a larger \$15 million rehabilitation effort financed by the Commonwealth, the County and four local jurisdictions. Design shortfalls from the original construction coupled with 60 years of stress from hurricanes and rising waters have cast doubt on the Levee system's reliability and compliance with post-Katrina FEMA certification standards under the National Flood Insurance Program. In the era before the levee was finished in 1955, major floods would periodically destroy downtown Williamsport and its surroundings—and with the river setting new records in recent years, the only difference today is how much more would be destroyed.

Greater Williamsport is home to 120,000 people and the commercial core of a region that stretches from Harrisburg to the Canadian border and Scranton to State College. Nearly 44% of the population lives in the flood zone behind the 20-mile levee system, which is responsible for an estimated 87% of Lycoming County's economic activity that generates over 80% of its tax revenues and employs 45% of its workforce. Among those protected are 24 of the County's 50 largest employers, including manufacturers Lycoming Engines and Shop-Vac, UMPC Williamsport Regional Medical Center, the Pennsylvania College of Technology and Lycoming College, as well as the Lycoming County Government Center and federal offices. Studies have

found that floods causing 10% damage with a 5-year recovery timeframe would reduce economic output by \$35 million; 25% damage by \$88 million, and 50% damage by \$176 million.

FEMA decertification likewise poses substantial economic risk even before a flood threat materializes, given that over \$1 billion in assets behind the levee (including parts of two designated Opportunity Zones) would no longer be shielded from the NFIP's special flood hazard area insurance mandates. Families would be hit hard, and businesses of all sizes would be forced to shoulder high and rising insurance costs—costs that would come out of local investments in facilities, operations, and jobs at the same time area families come under the pressure from new premiums to pay.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, and for EDA's continued support of rural communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Fred Keller". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Fred Keller
Member of Congress