Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 18, 2017

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write today to express our deep concern over your Administration's proposal to eliminate the South Florida Geographic Initiative (SFGI), one of more than 50 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) programs your budget outline has proposed cutting.

In 1992, the Administrator of the EPA designated South Florida as the subject of a Geographical Initiative with the understanding that South Florida's communities face numerous and complex environmental issues that affect the well-being of the public and the area's natural resources. Most of these issues relate to agriculture, an expanding population, land use changes, and the long-term protection of the unique subtropical landscape and biodiversity of the region.

For more than 20 years, the SFGI has been monitoring the threat of toxins such as mercury, phosphorus, and other potentially damaging nutrients in our ecologically-fragile region. The multibillion dollar federal and state partnership on Everglades restoration relies on SFGI data. In fact, the SFGI program's water quality and phosphorus data led to the investment of $880 million by the State of Florida on water quality improvement facilities to reduce the flow of damaging nutrients from farms, ranches, and yards into the Everglades, and we now know that approximately 90 percent of the Everglades is meeting scientifically-determined standards.

The SFGI also supports water quality monitoring in our valuable estuaries and coastal waters including Florida Bay, Biscayne Bay, the Caloosahatchee Estuary, and the Indian River Lagoon, as well as waters along the Florida Reef Tract from Martin County through the Florida Keys. Besides water quality monitoring in South Florida's fresh and marine waters, the SFGI supports the EPA's efforts to improve our region's water quality by identifying needed water quality treatment projects, and partnering with other agencies to replace 25,000 ineffective septic tanks, 4000 cesspits, and 900 shallow wells.

Support for South Florida's unique environment, including the Everglades, our coral reefs, and the beautiful Florida Keys has long been a bipartisan endeavor for the Florida congressional delegation. Your Administration's proposed cuts represent a marked departure from this bipartisan commitment to conserving and protecting South Florida's wetlands and coastal waters, and one that would prove devastating to Florida's natural resources.

We urge you to reverse course and support funding for this vital piece of Florida's – and our nation's – conservation efforts, and we look forward to working with you to ensure its continued success.

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Sincerely,

Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress, FL-23

Brian Mast
Member of Congress, FL-18

Al Lawson, Jr.
Member of Congress, FL-5

Frederica Wilson
Member of Congress, FL-24

Val Demings
Member of Congress, FL-10

Lois Frankel
Member of Congress, FL-21

Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress, FL-20

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress, FL-27

Carlos Curbelo
Member of Congress, FL-26

Ted Deutch
Member of Congress, FL-22