

TO: House Commerce Committee

FROM: Catherine Dimitruk, Executive Director, Northwest Regional Planning Commission

DATE: February 14, 2018

Thank you for providing the opportunity for input on the budget priorities and policies for FY 2019. Regional Planning Commissions recognize that balancing the budget continues to be a challenge and we value the Committee's continued support for our work.

RPCs appreciate the Executive Budget recommendation for level funding for Municipal Planning Grants and Regional Planning Commission core funds (pages 881-882). This funding allows RPCs to complete their core planning and implementation work, and serves to leverage additional federal dollars for programs such as Brownfields Development. RPCs are concerned that administration-imposed changes to the MPG program will make it increasingly difficult for small municipalities to access the funds; we have expressed those concerns to ACCD leadership.

RPCs are concerned about ANR Basin Planning funding for partner support; ANR is proposing a 20% cut. Basin Planning is crucial because these plans set the implementation priorities for water quality projects. Additional funds are also needed for project development so that we can ensure a pipeline of effective water quality projects. RPCs will be working with the House Institutions Committee to direct more funds toward project development.

Funding for Year Three of the technical assistance for municipalities under the energy planning bill (Act 174) is a high priority for RPCs and our municipalities. The Governor's budget submission did not include this critical appropriation. RPCs are working with the House Energy and Technology Committee to include \$300,000.00 to the appropriations bill to fund Year Three of technical assistance to municipalities, ensuring continued implementation of Act 174. These are not general fund dollars. Since the law was passed, 92 communities received hands on assistance in developing enhanced energy plans at the local level with an additional 45 towns seeking assistance, if funding is made available in FY 19.

Funding for workforce development is crucial to support all aspects of economic development. Any additional funding must be flexible to ensure it is available to whomever in the regions is doing the work. Performance and accountability should guide decisions about funding.

Finally, thank you for supporting H.748 the bill supporting electronic notification and reducing the administrative requirements for state designations.