

STEVE COHEN
9TH DISTRICT, TENNESSEE

2404 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

TELEPHONE: (202) 225-3265
FAX: (202) 225-5663

CLIFFORD DAVIS/ODELL HORTON
FEDERAL BUILDING
167 NORTH MAIN STREET
SUITE 369
MEMPHIS, TN 38103

TELEPHONE: (901) 544-4131
FAX: (901) 544-4329

www.cohen.house.gov

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4209

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COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND
COOPERATION IN EUROPE
(U.S. HELSINKI COMMISSION)

The Honorable Julian Castro
Secretary
Department of Housing and Urban Development
451 7th Street S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20410

Dear Secretary Castro,

I am writing to offer my strong support for the application submitted by the Shelby County Government for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) National Disaster Resilience Competition.

This application will build on the Mid-South Regional Greenprint and Sustainability Plan, a tri-state planning initiative funded by a HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant. Shelby County is positioned to be a leader across the United States in developing forward-looking approaches to balancing natural and built environments to protect communities, particularly vulnerable populations, from future disaster risk while improving quality of life for all residents.

In April 2011, Shelby County experienced a series of three severe storms, leading to historic flooding, three presidentially declared disasters, and \$2 billion in damage. While the county has since worked to recover in many areas, several communities, particularly those with high concentrations of low- to moderate-income households, remain unaddressed. In order to protect these areas from future flood and other climate risk, Shelby County has developed a series of strategies, building on the regional Greenprint plan, to improve the natural environment's ability to handle flood waters while providing recreational, social, and economic benefits to surrounding communities.

The county's application proposes addressing needs in diverse communities across Shelby County in each of the three major watersheds. These strategies not only protect nearby residents from future flood risk, but businesses and infrastructure, as well. Of critical significance is also the protection of the U.S. Naval Support Activity in Millington, TN, an area that not only experienced flooding in 2011, but more catastrophic flooding in 2010 when the Naval command center was under water due to flooding along Big Creek, disrupting operations for nearly two months. Providing flood resilience for the base is an issue of national security as well as economic stability. It is estimated the U.S. Naval Support Activity brings economic benefits of \$300 million per year to the county and region.

Significant public-private partnerships are already in place to provide leverage for the project. I believe in this project and know that it will have a long term impact for decades to come in providing disaster resilience, environmental benefit, and socioeconomic benefit.

If you have any questions about this application or require further information from my office, please contact me or my Legislative Assistant, Michael Fulton, at 202.225.3265. I offer my full support for this project and am hopeful that the Department will respond with a favorable decision.

As always, I remain,

Most sincerely,



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress