

The Honorable Bill Cassidy
United States Senator
530 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator
520 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

June 15, 2021

Dear Senators Cassidy and Whitehouse,

We are writing to offer our strong, unqualified endorsement of the Reinvesting in Shoreline Economies and Ecosystems (RISEE) Act. This important legislation will significantly expand vital coastal restoration and protection efforts across America and along the Gulf coast, providing critical funding to foster community and natural resource resilience in the face of accelerating sea level rise, extreme weather events, hurricane and flood damage, and other climate-related threats.

Recognizing that these challenges increasingly imperil coastal lands, lives, and livelihoods all across the country, they are particularly acute in coastal Louisiana, where a wetland area the size of a football field disappears into the Gulf of Mexico every 100 minutes. This existential land loss crisis poses unacceptable risks to area residents; to a uniquely important ecosystem recognized around the world for its natural, recreational, and wildlife resources; and to our nation's economy. The Louisiana coast is home to five of America's largest ports, represents nearly one-third of all commercial fisheries in the U.S., is a major destination for tourists and sportsmen, and produces fully 90 percent of the nation's offshore energy. Restore the Mississippi River Delta Coalition has worked for decades with local communities, federal and state agencies, and a broad national constituency to support policies and programs to protect and enhance these irreplaceable natural, economic, and community assets.

The RISEE Act will deliver substantial additional resources to foster resilience here and in other at-risk coastal communities and landscapes. We are particularly encouraged by the inclusion of provisions to increase the share of offshore energy revenues to Louisiana and other states under the Gulf of Mexico Energy Security Act (GOMESA). As you know, the State of Louisiana, through a constitutional amendment, has committed these revenues to restoration and resilience efforts, and the state's outstanding Coastal Master Plan ensures that the much-needed funding from your legislation will be put to work on well-vetted priority projects. With no time to lose in the battle against coastal land loss, these additional GOMESA revenues will be vital to continue and expand upon the essential work this funding stream has enabled.

We also appreciate the dedicated funding your legislation will provide for the National Oceans and Coastal Security Fund, through both GOMESA and through future revenues from offshore wind energy. By ensuring reliable annual funding for this account and facilitating nature-based climate solutions, the RISEE Act will enhance critical community and infrastructure resilience, protect and restore key habitats and natural systems, and provide for crucial monitoring of diverse impacts on coastal and marine resources. These and other funds provided in the bill will provide a considerable, necessary boost for coastal communities and states working to safeguard their residents, economies, and coastlines.

By reinvesting coastal energy revenues in coastal protection, restoration, and resilience, the RISEE Act will bring vital resources to mitigate the mounting hazards, risks, and impacts coastal communities face. We support your efforts to advance this important bill, and we look forward to working with you to see it enacted in the 117th Congress.

Sincerely,

Restore the Mississippi River Delta Coalition



Steve Cochran
Campaign Director, Restore the MRD/
Associate Vice President, Coastal Resilience
Environmental Defense Fund



Kimberly Davis Reyher
Executive Director
Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana



Kristi Trail
Executive Director
Pontchartrain Conservancy



Brian Moore
Vice President, Gulf of Mexico Policy
National Audubon Society



David Muth
Director, Gulf Restoration Program
National Wildlife Federation



Natalie Snider
Senior Director, Coastal Resilience
Environmental Defense Fund