July 30, 2013

The Honorable Harold Rogers  
Chairman  
House Committee on Appropriations  
H-307, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

Nita M. Lowey  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on Appropriations  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers and Ranking Member Lowey:

The National Brownfields Coalition is writing to express extreme concern relative to the “zeroing” of the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Brownfields Program by fiscal year 2014 Interior and Environment appropriations bill. The Subcommittee’s action ignores the program’s 17-year track record of helping communities overcome the barriers to productive re-use of vacant, contaminated land, often leading to revitalized neighborhoods and re-purposed industrial corridors, the new economic engines of large and small towns all across the country.

We urge the Appropriations Committee to include at least level funding for the program, $162 million.

Funds under this program (authorized by the Small Business Liability Relief and Brownfields Revitalization Act of 2001) are used to assess and clean up brownfields such
as abandoned or under-utilized warehouses, inactive factories, gas stations, salvage yards, vacant lots, contaminated properties, and other eyesores that plague virtually every community. These properties cause blight to neighborhoods, inhibit economic development, pose risks to public health and the environment, and erode the tax base of communities.

The undersigned coalition of organizations represents thousands of communities and tens of millions of Americans who have been working during the past decade to promote the reuse of contaminated properties. Our coalition, together with federal and state government agencies, has demonstrated that a strategic combination of public and private investment can return brownfield properties to productive use.

By any measure, the EPA Brownfields program has been tremendously successful. On average $1.00 of EPA funds leverage $17.79 of funding from other sources. The Brownfields Program has also functioned as an efficient job producer, helping create more than 85,883 new jobs. These impressive numbers only tell part of the story, as communities across the country report that brownfields projects are often lynchpins to spurring larger revitalization efforts, increasing local tax revenue, and bringing new vitality to struggling neighborhoods and communities.

While the EPA Brownfields Program has helped numerous communities, much remains to be done. Experts estimate there remain as many as 1 million brownfield properties nationwide. These sites continue to blight neighborhoods, discourage new investment, and undermine economic progress in many communities. Historically, EPA has been able to fund only about one third of the qualified applicants for federal brownfields grants.

Again, we urge the Appropriations Committee to continue to make these modest but critical investments by funding the program at last year’s level: $162 million.

If you have questions or want additional information, please contact Evans Paull with the National Brownfields Coalition at 202-329-4282, ev@redevelopmenteconomics.com.
Sincerely,

Smart Growth America
U.S. Conference of Mayors
National Association of Counties
Local Initiatives Support Corporation
Environmental Bankers Association
National Association of Local Government Environmental Professionals
National Brownfields Association
Groundwork USA
Center for Creative Land Recycling
Wisconsin Brownfields Study Group
Florida Brownfields Association
Minnesota Brownfields
Louisiana Brownfields Association
City of Milwaukee
City of Phoenix
City of Rochester
City of Tacoma
New York City Office of Environmental Remediation
Philadelphia Industrial Corporation
Saint Paul Port Authority
City of Danville
City of Rockford, Illinois
City of Ottawa, Illinois
Goldstein Brownfields Foundation
New Partners for Community Revitalization
New York City Brownfields Partnership
Terracon
Cardno TBE
Maul, Foster & Alongi
Knauf Shaw LLP
Environmental Financial Advisor LLC
Legends Environmental Insurance Services
Goldstein Environmental Law Firm, P.A.
Brownfield Redevelopment Solutions
NYC Environmental Justice Alliance

cc: The Honorable Michael Simpson, Chair, Subcommittee on Interior and Environment
The Honorable James Moran, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Interior and Environment
Members of the House Committee on Appropriations