In an attempt to help some of the areas most affected by the toxic algae blooms that are spreading in South Florida’s waterways, U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.) today introduced an amendment to the Senate’s upcoming spending bill that would open the door to federal assistance for states and local communities hardest hit by the toxic slime.

The amendment Nelson introduced today is identical to his standalone piece of legislation that the Senate approved unanimously in September 2017 – but the House has refused to take up.

If the Senate approves Nelson’s measure again – this time as an amendment to the must-pass government spending bill currently being shepherded through Congress – the House will be forced to consider it as part of the broader government funding bill when lawmakers from both chambers get together to work out the differences between the House and Senate versions during conference committee.

“These algae blooms are hurting our environment and our local economies,” Nelson said. “This bill will help make federal assistance available to the communities hardest hit by these algae outbreaks.”

Specifically, Nelson’s legislation would give the heads of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) the authority to declare a severe algae bloom as a nationally significant event, which would make federal resources available to those impacted by the outbreak.

It would also set aside an additional $110 million over five years for research into the causes and control of large algae blooms and hypoxia.