



*Water is life.* The People's Water Board Coalition advocates for access, protection, and conservation of water. We believe water and sanitation are human rights and all people require access to safe, affordable water and wastewater provisions. Water is a commons that should be held in the public trust free of privatization. PWBC's mission promotes awareness of the interconnectedness of all people and resources.

June 24, 2025

**RE: SHORT-TERM FUNDING FOR EXISTING WATER ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

Dear, Michigan House Member of the Appropriations Committee's Human Services Sub-committee:

Thank you for time on today's agenda to share more about the need for resources to support existing water assistance programs affordability in the State of Michigan. These services protect thousands of vulnerable households and support the critical operations of water providers.

Before the end of the last session, the legislature was very close to passing long-sought bills for the creation of a statewide water affordability program. The bill package included a new and sustainable funding mechanism that would eliminate the need to seek annual appropriations for statewide program benefits and administration.

*Today, the need is stronger than ever as pandemic-related funding expires for programs that have assisted low-income residential customers and the water providers that serve them.* There are no other resources available for local water providers to offer discounted water, wastewater, and/or drainage bills to low-income households. Many customers have already been removed from discounted bill programs or notified of their impending end.

The end result, again, will be customers who cannot afford to pay their bills in full, who will acquire sizeable arrearage debt, whose delinquent bills may be transferred to local tax authorities as property liens, and water providers who will disconnect service, gain uncollectable debt, and lose revenue that impacts all customers.

The Michigan Senate has recognized this challenge and reintroduced in April several updated water affordability bills with bipartisan support. As an invested and contributing grassroots coalition, we are reaching out to every legislator to enact genuine reform alongside hundreds of water providers, local officials, and health professionals.

While progress continues to be made for House bill sponsors, the need for short-term appropriations is dire as water bills continue rising due to provider infrastructure demands and operational and maintenance expenses.

The estimated gap funding need is \$60 million. We strongly seek your support and guidance to obtain short-term funding for existing water assistance programs through this subcommittee and the Appropriations committee. Your leadership is crucial and we look forward to offering additional information and testimonials, as needed.

With appreciation and regard,

Sylvia Orduño, Director

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