



**Testimony presented to the Michigan House of Representatives Appropriations Subcommittee By: Jasmine Carson, Wayne Metro Community Action Agency- June 24, 2025**

Thank You, Honorable Chair and Members of the Subcommittee,

My name is Jasmine Carson, and I serve as the Executive Director of Empowerment and Integration at Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency, also known as Wayne Metro. We are one of Michigan's largest anti-poverty organizations, with a primary service footprint in Wayne County. Today, I want to highlight a growing and urgent need: water assistance. It has become the number one request we receive from households facing crisis. These are often working families dealing with a temporary setback—a job loss, illness, or the loss of a loved one. When a water bill goes unpaid, the consequences escalate quickly, turning into a public health risk or a housing stability issue.

These assistance programs are designed to intervene early and efficiently. They provide timely, targeted support that prevents far more costly outcomes—both for families and for our systems.

Since 2022, Wayne Metro has administered nearly \$59.5 million in water assistance, reaching over 36,000 households across Michigan. These resources were deployed quickly, with rigorous compliance and oversight in place. They have proven both responsive and responsible, meeting immediate needs while maintaining strong accountability.

Although our core work is in Wayne County, the flexibility provided by LIHWAP allowed us to step in where other options were unavailable. We supported households in communities like:

- Alma
- Port Huron
- Clifford
- East Pointe
- Beulah
- Marine City
- Oak Park
- St. Clair Shore
- South Lyon
- Lake Odessa
- Van Buren.

Water affordability is not limited to urban centers, it is a statewide challenge.

We've also seen a significant increase in need across Out-Wayne County areas such as Taylor, Westland, Dearborn, and Dearborn Heights. In just two years, enrollments in these communities rose from approximately 2,400 in 2022 to over 6,100 in 2024. This year alone, we've delivered nearly \$4 million in support to those families.

These programs are not handouts, they are essential public investments. They protect public health, reduce emergency costs, and help families stay housed, healthy, and financially stable.

We respectfully urge the committee to continue, where possible, increase appropriations for water affordability programs. The need is growing, the results are measurable, and the impact is lasting.