



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

March 24, 2023

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Rosa DeLauro
Ranking Member
House Appropriations Committee
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Chairman
House Appropriations Committee –
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies
Appropriations.
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Granger, Ranking Member DeLauro, and Chairman Aderholt:

We write in support of the Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) and request that the House Appropriations Committee support a funding level of \$500 million for the program in FY24 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations.

LIHWAP provides critical funding for low-income households with their water and wastewater bills. This program was essential during the COVID-19 pandemic, helping families keep their water on and their families safe. While this program has proven its ability to assist American households, we believe the program has the potential to have a wider impact, independent from but similar to the Low-Income Household Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

When considering any changes or updates to the existing LIHWAP structure, we believe it is important to include modifications that improve enrollment and minimize barriers to implementation. Specifically, everyone who is already eligible for other federal income-based assistance programs, such as SNAP, LIHEAP, TANF, and Veterans programs should be eligible for LIHWAP, and where possible, enrollment in LIHWAP should be automatic. Universal eligibility could be mandated in the appropriations bill or via updated regulations from HHS. Automatic enrollment for people served by large water utilities can be achieved using modern technology but will require significant data sharing and communication among local municipalities, state governments, utilities, and the federal government.

Further, the equitable use of funds must be considered in any proposed change to the program structure. We recommend that the equitable use of funds includes but is not limited to: paying arrearages; reconnection fees, plumbing costs for fixing leaks that result in high bills; tax liens;

and direct grant payments to renters. We are also concerned that much of the funding already allocated to LIHWAP is going unspent due, in part, to overly restrictive enrollment requirements, limiting its effectiveness to the American public and understating the need for water assistance on the whole. We urge the Committee to work with the Administration to expeditiously spend already-appropriated LIHWAP funding, or to allow for unspent funds to be rolled into the FY 24 appropriation.

LIHWAP is a vital, necessary program that, like many in the federal government, needs some thoughtful tweaks to maximize its effectiveness. But our residents cannot wait for policymakers to create a perfect program – they need assistance now. Providing an appropriation of \$500 million is strong first step on the path towards true water affordability in the United States.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, and we look forward to working with you further.

Sincerely,



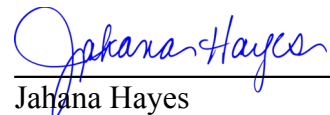
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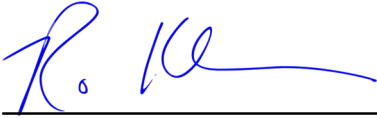
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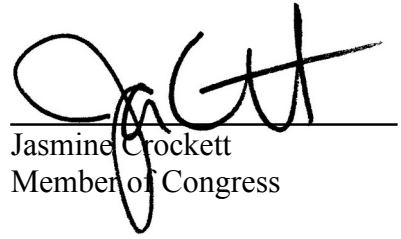
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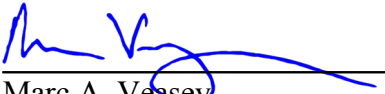
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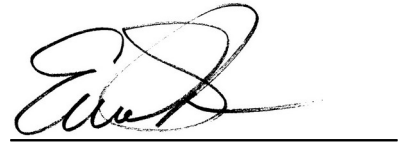
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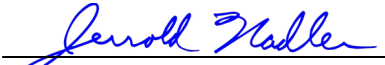
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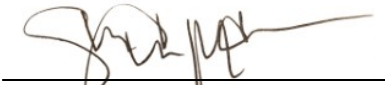
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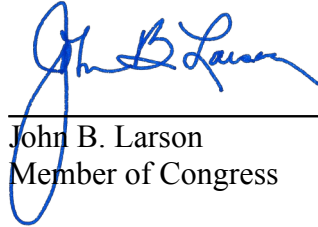
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