



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

March 27, 2026

The Honorable Tom Cole  
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  
Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies  
Appropriations  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Cole, 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 \$500 million in distinct, directed funding for the program in FY27 Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies Appropriations. The first federal program to exclusively assist low-income families with the water and wastewater bills, LIHWAP aided over 1.4 million households. The 2025 EPA Water Affordability Needs Assessment estimates that between 12.1 million and 19.2 million households throughout the U.S. lack affordable access to water services, suggesting that the actual need is significantly higher than just those assisted by LIHWAP. Yet, despite the growing need and LIHWAP's success in assisting our nation's most vulnerable residents, its funding has lapsed, ending a critical assistance lifeline to families in need.

Originating during the COVID-19 pandemic, LIHWAP was essential in helping families keep their water on and their families safe. LIHWAP, which was modeled after the longstanding Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), was used to help water customers pay arrears; reconnect services and cover late fees; and reduce rate charges to a more affordable level. LIHWAP and LIHEAP have similarities, but they each meet critical needs and warrant separate consideration and distinct funding streams.

Families across the country are facing an increased cost of living amidst a period of economic uncertainty, leaving many households struggling to afford basic necessities like utility bills. Moreover, water and wastewater utilities continue to face challenges as they make required critical infrastructure investments, build resilience to extreme weather events, and treat emerging contaminants, such as per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS). In the absence of adequate federal funding or a federal water assistance program, utilities may be forced to continue raising rates, which would increase the existing water bill burden on low-income households.

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. Overly restrictive enrollment requirements limit the program's effectiveness and States that have had difficulty spending their full LIHWAP allocation could reach more of their residents more effectively with universal enrollment modifications. 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. Increased technical assistance for smaller and rural utilities will also help boost enrollment and reach more of our residents.

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.

LIHWAP is a vital, necessary program that, like many in the federal government, could be improved with 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 for the Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program is strong step on the path towards true water affordability in the United States.

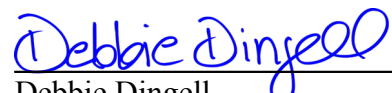
Thank you for your consideration of this request, and we look forward to working with you further.

Sincerely,



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Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress



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Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress



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Gwen S. Moore  
Member of Congress



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Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress



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Paul D. Tonko  
Member of Congress



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Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress



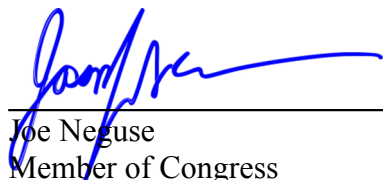
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Delia C. Ramirez  
Member of Congress



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Summer L. Lee  
Member of Congress



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Joe Neguse  
Member of Congress



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Greg Casar  
Member of Congress



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Lateefah Simon  
Member of Congress



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Robert Garcia  
Member of Congress



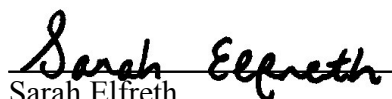
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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



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John Garamendi  
Member of Congress



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Sarah Elfreth  
Member of Congress



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Terri A. Sewell  
Member of Congress



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Frederica S. Wilson  
Member of Congress



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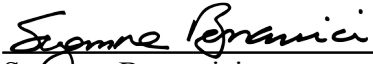
John B. Larson  
Member of Congress



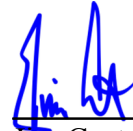
Kevin Mullin  
Member of Congress



Lucy McBath  
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress



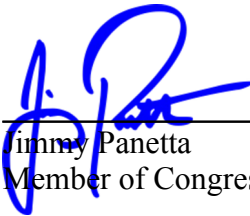
Jim Costa  
Member of Congress



Raul Ruiz, M.D.  
Member of Congress



Bennie G. Thompson  
Member of Congress



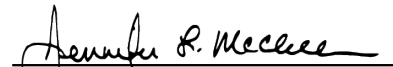
Jimmy Panetta  
Member of Congress



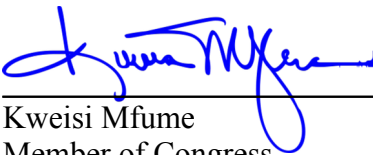
Maxine Dexter  
Member of Congress



Ritchie Torres  
Member of Congress



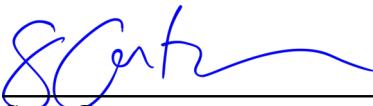
Jennifer L. McClellan  
Member of Congress



Kweisi Mfume  
Member of Congress



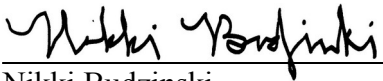
Wesley Bell  
Member of Congress



Sean Casten  
Member of Congress




Emanuel Cleaver, II  
Member of Congress



Nikki Budzinski  
Member of Congress



Shontel M. Brown  
Member of Congress



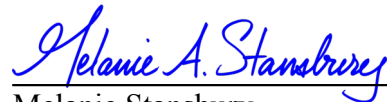
J. Luis Correa  
Member of Congress



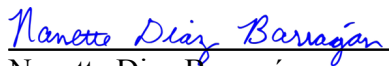
Seth Magaziner  
Member of Congress



Doris Matsui  
Member of Congress



Melanie Stansbury  
Member of Congress



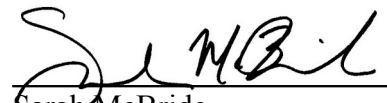
Nanette Diaz Barragán  
Member of Congress



Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress



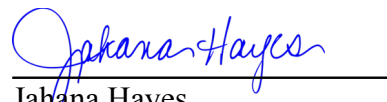
Emily Randall  
Member of Congress



Sarah McBride  
Member of Congress



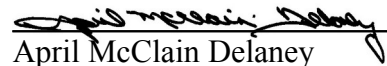
Salud Carbajal  
Member of Congress



Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress



Eric Sorensen  
Member of Congress



April McClain Delaney  
Member of Congress



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Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress



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Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress



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Sara Jacobs  
Member of Congress



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Jared Moskowitz  
Member of Congress



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Joyce Beatty  
Member of Congress



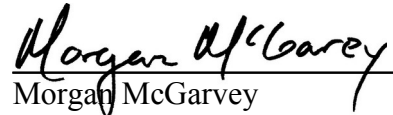
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Shri Thanedar  
Member of Congress



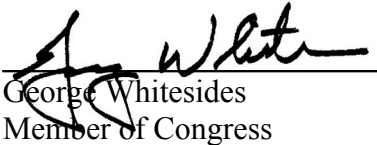
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Ted W. Lieu  
Member of Congress



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Morgan McGarvey  
Member of Congress



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George Whitesides  
Member of Congress



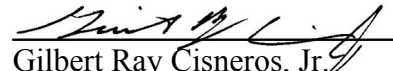
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Robin L. Kelly  
Member of Congress



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Chris Deluzio  
Member of Congress



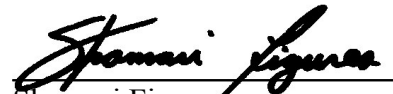
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Gilbert Ray Cisneros, Jr.  
Member of Congress



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Darren Soto  
Member of Congress

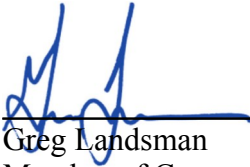


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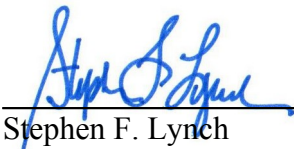
Shomari Figures  
Member of Congress



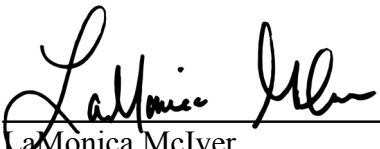
Mark Takano  
Member of Congress



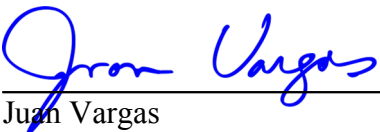
Greg Landsman  
Member of Congress



Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress



LaMonica McIver  
Member of Congress



Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress



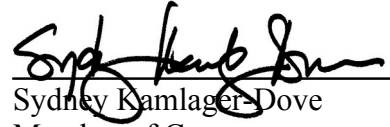
Yassamin Ansari  
Member of Congress



Emilia Strong Sykes  
Member of Congress



Dwight Evans  
Member of Congress



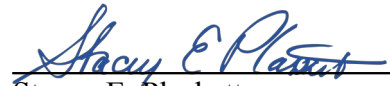
Sydney Kamlager-Dove  
Member of Congress



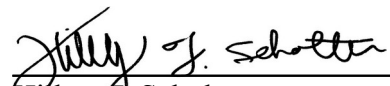
Diana DeGette  
Member of Congress



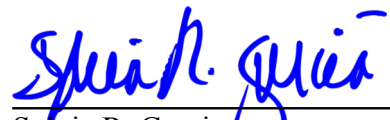
Donald Norcross  
Member of Congress



Stacey E. Plaskett  
Member of Congress



Hillary P. Scholten  
Member of Congress



Sylvia R. Garcia  
Member of Congress



Richard E. Neal  
Member of Congress



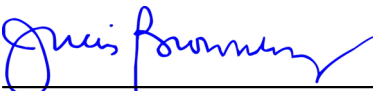
Janelle S. Bynum  
Member of Congress



Raja Krishnamoorthi  
Member of Congress



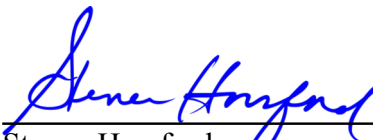
Jasmine Crockett  
Member of Congress



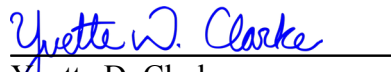
Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress



Dan Goldman  
Member of Congress




Steven Horsford  
Member of Congress



Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress



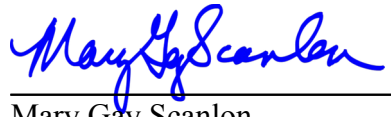
Nellie Pou  
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress



Kelly Morrison  
Member of Congress



Mary Gay Scanlon  
Member of Congress



Haley M. Stevens  
Member of Congress



Chris Pappas  
Member of Congress

*Joe Courtney*

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Joe Courtney  
Member of Congress

*Adelita S. Grijalva*

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Adelita S. Grijalva  
Member of Congress