



Gary A Brown
Director

735 Randolph Street, Detroit, MI 48226
313-224-4758 • debra.pospiech@detroitmi.gov

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VIA EMAIL TO: adam.fischer@mail.house.gov

Chairman Paul Tonko
House Committee on Energy and Commerce,
Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change
2125 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6115

RE: Amendments to Safe Drinking Water Act

Dear Chairman Tonko,

As you prepare for your upcoming House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Subcommittee on Environment and Climate Change hearing on “Reforming the Safe Drinking Water Act,” we want to make you aware that the Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD) is facing an unprecedented challenge to our financial stability and our customers’ ability to afford basic water and sewerage services. DWSD serves more than 700,000 residential citizens with clean drinking water, wastewater treatment and disposal, and stormwater management. DWSD’s water network consists of more than 2,700 miles of water mains that are an average of 95 years old.

The water challenges before us include the coronavirus pandemic and the need to ensure all citizens have water service regardless of their ability to pay, a dire need to repair and replace our aging infrastructure, and an unfunded mandate to replace 80,000 private lead service lines within 20 years. We estimate the cost to replace lead service lines at \$400 million, but we cannot pass the cost onto our customers. The Environmental Protection Agency specifically noted that low-income Detroit residents will disproportionately bear the cost burden to replace lead lines given the sheer volume of lines and our high poverty rate. Estimates for replacement of all lead service lines nationally range from \$30 billion to \$80 billion.

As the Subcommittee considers amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act and other water-related legislation, we respectfully ask that you help us protect public health. Designated funding through forgivable, negative-interest State Revolving Loan Funds and/or grant funding is necessary to help water suppliers remove lead service lines as quickly as possible.

Additionally, in a mere 90 days, we exhausted CARES funds allocated for citizens living without water—and the need continues. We need the federal government to replenish funding for water payment assistance programs for the duration of the coronavirus health emergency, as COVID continues to devastate our revenue receipts.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary A Brown". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Gary A Brown