



May 20, 2021

The Honorable Lisa Blunt Rochester
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Katko
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Blunt Rochester and Representative Katko:

The Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies (AMWA) and the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA) are pleased to offer our support for your efforts to address drinking water affordability through H.R. 3293, the Low-Income Water Customer Assistance Programs Act of 2021. This legislation brings attention to a major hole that currently exists in the federal safety net.

While the federal government has long maintained programs to help low-income individuals access essentials like food and home energy, drinking water and wastewater service has never been subject to similarly dedicated federal aid, even though water and sanitation are just as essential to life as are these other needs. Meanwhile, EPA has estimated that the nation's drinking water and wastewater systems need nearly \$750 billion worth of investments over the next 20 years just to maintain current levels of service. Individual water ratepayers will be largely responsible for these and other costs necessary to sustain local water systems, but the increased water rates necessary to address these challenges may strain the budgets of low-income customers.

Congress first provided funding toward water and wastewater assistance in last December's COVID-19 response legislation when it established a new Low-Income Household Drinking Water and Wastewater Emergency Assistance Program at the Department of Health and Human Services to help low-income households pay their water and sewer bills during the economic emergency caused by the pandemic. While this represents a good start, uninterrupted access to affordable drinking water will remain a critically important issue even after the pandemic ends.

We appreciate that the Low-Income Water Customer Assistance Programs Act of 2021 will build on this effort by establishing a pair of permanent and complementary drinking water and wastewater affordability programs at EPA. Importantly, recipients could use federal funding to increase the scope of existing local-level low-income water affordability programs or establish such programs in communities where they do not exist, thus helping thousands of additional American families have confidence in their uninterrupted access to clean and safe water services.

Ensuring water affordability for low-income households will remain an important objective for all communities in the years ahead. The federal government will have a role to play in this effort, so AMWA and NACWA appreciate your efforts to advance this discussion through introduction of the Low-Income Water Customer Assistance Programs Act. We look forward to continuing to work with you on this issue.

Sincerely,

Diane VanDe Hei
Chief Executive Officer
AMWA

Adam Krantz
Chief Executive Officer
NACWA