

United States Senate

January 12, 2024

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice Chair
Senate Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tammy Baldwin
Chair
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee
on Labor, Health and Human Services,
Education, and Related Agencies
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Murray, Vice Chair Collins, Chair Baldwin, and Ranking Member Capito:

We appreciate the Administration's work to establish the first-ever Federal Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) and urge the Committee to provide continued funding for LIHWAP at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) in any Fiscal Year 2024 funding bill.

Congress provided \$1.1 billion in the *Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021* and *American Rescue Plan of 2021* to provide critical assistance to low-income households with water and sewer bills. Since its creation in 2021 LIHWAP has helped more than 1.1 million households across the country maintain or restore water service. Nationwide, at least 13,000 water and wastewater systems in low-income, Tribal, rural, and urban communities have participated in the program to date. However, LIHWAP was established as a temporary program and funding expired at the end of Fiscal Year 2023, ending a lifeline for families in need across the country.

Water and sewer bills are rising more than twice as quickly as inflation and increasing faster than energy bills, medical expenses, and household incomes. As more than 150 organizations wrote in the attached letter, including water associations, environmental and public interest, consumer advocates, and labor unions, the need for low-income household water assistance is just as important to public health and economic development as other basic needs such as home energy and nutrition, which have benefitted from Federal support for decades.

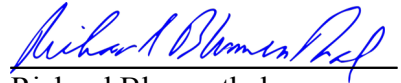
The *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* made a historic investment in the nation's water infrastructure, including the authorization of a program directing the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to implement a pilot program to provide federal low-income water customer assistance. As Congress works towards authorizing a permanent water assistance program to safeguard water affordability, we urge the Committee to provide continued funding for LIHWAP so that we may continue to provide critical water assistance to our most vulnerable children and families and ensure that those who need the help in paying their water bills are able to do so.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

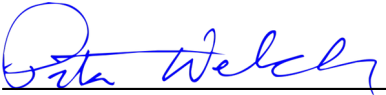
Sincerely,



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



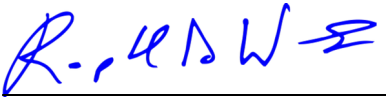
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



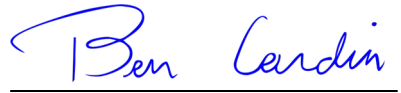
Peter Welch
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Debbie Stabenow
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Laphonza Butler
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



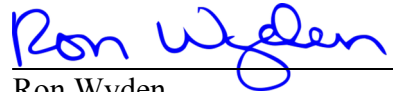
Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



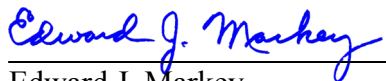
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



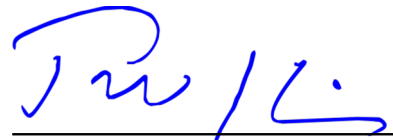
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



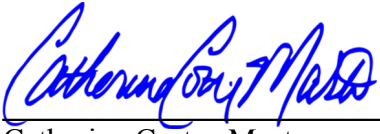
Jacky Rosen
United States Senator



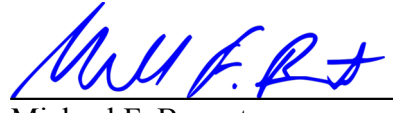
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator




Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator