

A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING STATEWIDE WATER AFFORDABILITY LEGISLATION

WASHTENAW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

February 7, 2024

WHEREAS in October 2023, a package of “Water Affordability” bills was introduced in the Michigan Senate and House of Representatives which, if enacted, would establish a first in the nation statewide program to provide eligible low-income households with water bill payments considered affordable based on national standards, along with a sustainable funding source to support the program and protections from water service shut off; and

WHEREAS SB 0549’23 and HB 5088’23 would create a low-income water residential affordability program under which qualifying individuals would not pay more than an average of 3% of their household income for water services and, if eligible, receive arrearage forgiveness for past due water debt and household plumbing repairs to prevent water loss; and

WHEREAS SB 0550’23 and HB 5089’23 would create the low-income water affordability fund within the Michigan Department of Treasury using a \$2 per month, per retail water metered account funding factor which would be used as a dedicated funding source to support the low-income residential water affordability program and, among other things, ensure that water utility providers recover the full cost of services provided to eligible and enrolled customers; and

WHEREAS SB 0551’23 and HB 5090’23 would create the “Water Shutoff Protection Act” which would require water utility providers give various forms of notice to residential customers prior to the disconnection of water service due to non-payment and to prevent water service disconnection for individuals meeting the requirements of a critical care customer whose life would be at imminent risk without household water services; and

WHEREAS the average inflation-adjusted water costs have roughly doubled (increased by 188%) for the state as a whole since 1980 and the cost of water service, on average, has increased at a faster rate than all other essential goods and services, except health care; and

WHEREAS customers who cannot afford water bill payments are at risk of water service shut off, property tax liens that can result in foreclosure, and other potentially devastating consequences including housing insecurity and harm to personal health, dignity, and family relationships; and

WHEREAS the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners recognizes that access to affordable water services is a fundamental human right, essential for the fiscal stability of water utility providers, necessary to protect public health and safety, and critical to the resilience and prosperity of Washtenaw County and all Michigan residents.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners supports and urges the Michigan Legislature to take action to pass Senate Bills 0549-0551 and House Bills 5088-5090.

COMMISSIONER	Y	N	A	COMMISSIONER	Y	N	A	COMMISSIONER	Y	N	A
Beeman	X			Maciejewski	X			Somerville	X		
Hodge	X			Rabhi	X						
LaBarre	X			Sanders	X						
Lyte	X			Scott	X						

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In Testimony Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the seal of said Court at Ann Arbor, this 8th day of February 2024.

Res. No. 24-028