



# AFFORDABLE WATER FOR ALL

Michigan needs a statewide plan for access to safe, affordable water. The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted that access to clean water is a public health need. Michigan Department of Housing and Human Services data shows thousands of Michigan residents are behind on their water bills. Average, inflation-adjusted water costs have increased by 188% for the state since 1980, with some urban areas seeing a rise of up to 320%.

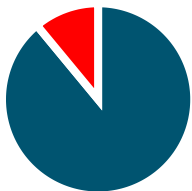
**In 2020, the Federal Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP)** became the first and only established water assistance program funded by the federal government. This grant has been administered statewide by local governments and has provided assistance for water/wastewater arrearages and disconnects to over 27,000 and counting Michigan households since FY21.

## THE NEED FOR A STATEWIDE SOLUTION

Federal Water Assistance will end March 31, 2024, and Michigan is on track to use up all available funding. Some local programs have also been able to offer assistance with plumbing repairs to prevent loss and leaks, but Michigan is home to hundreds of water suppliers of varying sizes and capacities, underscoring the need for a statewide program.

Building off years of community advocacy, Senator Chang convened a legislative workgroup to address water affordability issues. That group included the full array of stakeholders: water utilities, cities, advocates, environmental organizations, lawmakers, and state officials, and was an unprecedented effort to develop comprehensive water affordability legislation.

## STRONG PUBLIC SUPPORT



**89%**

SUPPORT  
WATER SHUTOFF  
PROTECTIONS



**67%**

SUPPORT AN  
AFFORDABILITY  
PROGRAM



**60%**

STILL SUPPORT AN  
AFFORDABILITY  
PROGRAM WITH A \$2 FEE



MICHIGAN  
LEAGUE OF  
CONSERVATION  
VOTERS

## LEGISLATIVE PACKAGE

### **SB 549/HB 5088: Low-Income Water Residential Affordability Program**

- ✔ Establishes a tiered statewide low-income residential water affordability program:
  - > 0-135% of the federal poverty level (FPL)- bill cannot exceed 2% of avg. income.
  - > 136%-200% of FPL - bill cannot exceed 3% of av. household income.
- ✔ Arrearage forgiveness up to \$1,500 in the first year of the program.
- ✔ Water infrastructure/plumbing repairs up to \$2,500 per household
- ✔ Statewide program will be administered through MDHHS unless customers enroll in a local water provider program.
- ✔ MDHHS will create a task force of appointed members to advise the department on best practices for administering the program.

### **SB 550/HB 508: Water Residential Affordability Program Fund**

- ✔ Creates the low-income water residential affordability program fund to cover:
  - > Administrative costs of the program;
  - > Payments to water providers for arrearages, plumbing repairs, and bill discounts.
- ✔ The funding factor will be a \$2 per month per retail water meter fee assessed on all residential water customers in the state generating \$60 million annually - can float to \$3.

### **SB 551/HB5090: Water Shutoff Protection Act**

- ✔ Ensures protection from immediate water service shutoffs for customers enrolled in the affordability program; providers must provide proper notice - 3 contact attempts prior to shutting off service, and requires a water provider to wait at least 120 days to shut off water service due to nonpayment.
- ✔ Prevents a water service provider from shutting off service for a "critical care customer."

### **SB 554/HB 5091: Landlord-Tenant Submetering Protections**

- ✔ Upon request, landlords must transfer a water bill to the tenant's name in a metered or sub-metered rental property within 60 days after the request is made.
- ✔ Prohibits a landlord from retaliating against a tenant upon such a request, and the landlord may not increase rent based on the transfer of water bills.
- ✔ This allows tenants in a rental property to obtain control of water bills and apply for the affordability program if they qualify.

### **SB 552-553/HB 5092-5093: Decriminalization of Water Reconnection**

- ✔ Decriminalizes the act of reconnecting water service in the case of a shutoff due to nonpayment from a five-year felony to a civil infraction with community service and a fine.
- ✔ Protections are instituted in a situation where, in the course of a water reconnection, a metering or backflow device is damaged in the process.