



Financial Services Audit Committee Communication

Date: October 27, 2023 (Rescheduled to November 9, 2023)

To: Great Lakes Water Authority Audit Committee

From: Haran Stanley, Management Professional

Re: Affordability & Assistance Update

Background: In 2021, an Affordability & Assistance Team was created within GLWA's Financial Services Area. The team serves as the internal and external resource for strategic policies and programs related to water affordability and assistance.

Analysis: This month we present an update on the initiatives the Affordability & Assistance Team have been focused on, including efforts related to sustainable water assistance funding and the Water Residential Assistance Program (WRAP).

Sustainable Water Assistance Funding

On October 2, 2023, State Senator Stephanie Chang hosted a press conference to announce the introduction of draft legislation regarding water affordability. GLWA applauds the efforts of Senator Stephanie Chang in engaging a diverse group of stakeholders in the meaningful discussions that have resulted in this first of its kind statewide water affordability and assistance legislation.

GLWA is proud of its participation, and ability to contribute as a resource to Senator Chang and the workgroup as they developed the framework for the legislation. It is now important for GLWA to further this dialogue by sharing this package of bills with its Member Partner communities for their review and consideration.

As Michigan's largest water and wastewater utility, GLWA is committed to both short-term and long-term water affordability. GLWA's WRAP was the first of its kind for a utility in the state of Michigan. GLWA recognizes that to be truly effective, short- and long-term affordability programs must both be pursued. Short-term affordability programs play a critical role in assisting residents in need through bill payment and conservation assistance; also important are long-term investments in Michigan's water infrastructure that protect public health and control future costs.

On September 28, 2023, GLWA provided an overview of the draft bills during the One Water Partnership Meeting.

GLWA looks forward to continuing to be a part of the affordability conversation that Senator Chang initiated around this package of proposed legislation.

On October 19, 2023 GLWA participated in a panel focused on water assistance and affordability efforts at Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency's 2023 Annual Meeting. State Senator Stephanie Chang was the keynote speaker and fellow panelists include Director Gary Brown of Detroit Water and Sewerage Department (DWSD) and Sylvia Orduno of The People's Water Board Coalition (PWBC).

WRAP Updates

BS&A has completed development of an optional feature within Member Partner's BS&A billing systems that automates the process of applying WRAP payments to the corresponding customer utility account. GLWA launched this project as part of our commitment to streamlining administrative processes related to WRAP funding and to reduce the burden on Member Partners as well as increase their engagement with the program. WRAP Service Delivery Partners are updating and testing their internal systems to accommodate this new feature and are working with communities to begin implementation. Service Delivery Partners have notified member partner communities of the new tool and are scheduling meetings to walk them through the new feature and what the change means. Flint has successfully begun using the tool.

As WRAP utilization continues to grow due to the launch of the Income Based Plan (WRAP IBP), the team is exploring a structure that will allow for donations to fund WRAP services. Along with structural decisions, a proposal portfolio is being developed to document the effectiveness of the program.

WRAP enrollments in the City of Flint and Out-Wayne County are currently paused as funds are fully committed for FY 2024.

Proposed Action: Receive and file this report.