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Resolution 2020-037 to Increase Water Residential Assistance Program Funding and Expand Program Eligibility Criteria

GREAT LAKES WATER AUTHORITY

RESOLUTION 2020-037

TO INCREASE WATER RESIDENTIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

FUNDING AND EXPAND PROGRAM ELGIBILITY CRITERIA

By: Member: Brown

WHEREAS, the Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA) is dedicated to providing the nation's best water and wastewater services to all citizens in the southeast Michigan region; and

WHEREAS, the GLWA Board of Directors (Board) approves rates, fees and charges and rate-setting protocols for the GLWA; and

WHEREAS, the Board recognizes that for many customers the cost of water and wastewater services presents a burden that they may not be able to afford, and

WHEREAS, the Board recognizes that discontinuation of service due a retail customer's inability to pay may threaten human health and well-being and impede the GLWA's responsibility for the protection of public health; and

WHEREAS, the Board seeks, to reduce the number of customers who may be subject to service interruption due to an inability to pay for services end to prevent service interruptions; and

WHEREAS, the Board recognizes that its customers will benefit from regional programs to reduce retail service disconnections, accrued billing arrearages, bad debt expense, and incurrence of extraordinary billing and collection expenses; and

WHEREAS, the Board recognizes that such programs will render its customers public health and other non-monetary benefits, and yield positive effects on total water service revenue requirements for wholesale and retail customers; and

WHEREAS, the GLWA's common-to-all cost allocations shall include an amount equal to .5% of base budgeted operating revenues per year, for deposit to an independently administered Water Residential Assistance Program (WRAP) fund to provide assistance to indigent residential customers throughout [the Systems who agree to take appropriate actions to reduce consumption; and

WHEREAS, since its inception, WRAP has assisted almost 19,000 residents in the region with payment assistance, water conservation and plumbing repairs, and wraparound services, thereby preventing service interruptions and bringing stability to participating residential households; and

WHEREAS, Wayne Metropolitan Community Action Agency, the WRAP administrator, as well as its partners throughout the GLWA service area including Wayne, Oakland County (OLHSA), Genesee County (GCARD), Macomb County (MCA), and Monroe County (MCOP), determined there is a substantial population in the region that is underserved by the WRAP, especially the "working poor," and

WHEREAS expansion of the WRAP program funding and program eligibility criteria would enable WRAP to reach more citizens in the region who are struggling to pay for water and wastewater services; and

WHEREAS, an increase of WRAP funding from .5% to 1.0% is not prohibited by the Memorandum of Understanding Regarding the Formation of the Great Lakes Water Authority or any court orders related to the formation of the GLWA; NOW THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the GLWA Board hereby approves an increase in the WRAP funding from .5% to 1.0% of base budgeted Operating revenues per year, and an expansion of the program eligibility criteria to include the following:

- Increase eligibility to 200% or less of federal Poverty level;
- Increase conservation and plumbing repairs spending per household from \$1,000 to \$1,500; and
- Allow renters to take advantage of conservation and plumbing repairs to reduce their water consumption, upon landlord executing an agreement not to raise rents for one year;

to supplement WRAP's conservation and plumbing repair program for homeowners; \$25 credit on water bills, without an expiration date, for income-eligible senior citizens and disabled persons; and wrap around services and financial education programs for all participants.