



Financial Services Audit Committee Communication

Date: May 26, 2023

To: Great Lakes Water Authority Audit Committee

From: Madison Merzlyakov, Affordability & Assistance Manager

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, such as outreach on available assistance programs and efforts related to sustainable water assistance funding.

Outreach Initiatives

GLWA continues to encourage Member Partner participation in the Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP), a temporary program that is federally funded and administered through the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS). Communities must formally opt-in to the program for their residents to access funding available to pay down past due balances. Last month, GLWA sent an email blast to Member Partners providing a LIHWAP overview and directions on how to opt-in. This month GLWA mailed a letter from Chief Executive Officer Suzanne Coffey to elected officials of communities that are not yet participating in LIHWAP to encourage further participation.

Sustainable Water Assistance Funding

Meaningful conversations are underway with various entities at both the state and federal levels regarding water affordability. Recently, GLWA and other stakeholders have engaged in discussions across the state of Michigan focused on providing a framework for a statewide sustainable water assistance program. Michigan State Senator Stephanie Chang leads a work group focused on draft legislation around this issue in which GLWA participates.

In support of these conversations, GLWA is working with a coalition to provide feedback to Senator Chang that encourages legislation while preserving the right of local control. Other members of this coalition include the Michigan Municipal League, Michigan Section of the American Water Works Association, Detroit Water and Sewerage Department, Oakland

County Water Resources Commissioners Office, Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, The Nature Conservancy, and the Michigan Townships Association.

The Affordability & Assistance team will continue to update the Audit Committee as this important work progresses.

Proposed Action: Receive and file this report.