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Water Sector Organizations Applaud New Water Affordability Legislation

Apr 17, 2024

Bipartisan House proposal will continue successful Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program

Washington, DC – Today a coalition of drinking water and wastewater sector organizations offered its strong support for H.R. 8032, the [Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program Establishment Act](#), bipartisan legislation that would permanently establish low-income water assistance for families struggling to access affordable drinking water and wastewater services.

Sponsored by Reps. Eric Sorensen (D-IL) and Lori Chavez-DeRemer (R-OR), H.R. 8032 is a companion to Senate legislation, S. 3830, introduced by Sen. Alex Padilla (D-CA) earlier this year. Both proposals would permanently authorize the Department of Health and Human Services' Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP), established by Congress in 2020, to promote public health by easing the burden on families struggling to afford their monthly water bills.

Since that time, the LIHWAP program has proven to be a critical lifeline, allowing more than 1.6 million households across 49 states and numerous tribes and territories to maintain water and wastewater services in the face of economic hardship.

Unfortunately, the temporary program expired at the end of 2023, leaving low-income families nationwide at risk of losing access to essential water services. This legislation would also support communities as they invest in critical drinking water and wastewater infrastructure upgrades by ensuring ratepayer affordability over time.

"Drinking water service is an essential lifeline, regardless of a person's income," said **Tom Dobbins, CEO of the Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies**.

"AMWA thanks Reps. Sorensen and Chavez-DeRemer, along with Sen. Padilla, for their leadership in the effort to extend the LIHWAP program. Just as the federal government has long-established programs to support nutrition assistance and home heating and cooling service for households in need, it is necessary to include low-income water assistance in the federal safety net as well."

“We have seen firsthand how LIHWAP has proven to be successful in getting assistance to our neighbors who need it the most,” said **Robert F. Powelson, president and CEO of the National Association of Water Companies**. “We are grateful for the leadership of Reps. Sorensen and Chavez-DeRemer, as well as Sen. Padilla, and their efforts to help consumers by introducing and championing legislation to make this assistance permanent. Now it is imperative that Congress take action to establish a permanent low-income assistance program so that the most vulnerable households have a lifeline when they are struggling.”

“LIHWAP has proven to be an essential lifeline, serving more than 1.6 million households who cannot afford clean and safe water services,” said **Adam Krantz, CEO of the National Association of Clean Water Agencies (NACWA)**. “NACWA applauds the leadership of Reps. Sorensen and Chavez-DeRemer in recognizing the need for a permanent federal water assistance program. This program helps public clean water agencies make necessary infrastructure investments while protecting households in need. We look forward to working with these Congressional water champions to get this across the finish line.”

“For two years, LIHWAP has served as a lifeline for customers struggling to keep up with their water bills,” said **Tracy Mehan, Executive Director of American Water Works Association Government Affairs Office**. “We are pleased that Reps. Sorensen and Chavez-DeRemer have joined Sen. Padilla in the next phase of moving this important legislation forward. Authorizing a permanent low-income assistance program is an important step toward assuring that all households have access to safe and reliable water service.”

“WEF is grateful for the leadership and compassion Representatives Sorensen and Chavez-DeRemer have demonstrated through the introduction of the low-income household water assistance program legislation (LIWAP). Clean, safe, and reliable drinking water, sewer, and stormwater services are critical to public health, public safety, and environmental protection” said **Aimeé Killeen, President of the Water Environment Federation (WEF)**. “Household ratepayers provide the vast majority of the funds needed to maintain, operate, and modernize our water systems. Unfortunately, many households also face financial struggles that make it difficult to pay rising utility bills. Having a sustainable financial assistance program to help these households not only ensures that all Americans receive essential water services, but also allows the entire community to benefit from investment back into our water systems.”

Water and wastewater sector organizations [endorsed](#) the Senate version of the LIHWAP Establishment Act in February. The sector is proud to support the new House legislation, which takes an identical approach to S.3830 and includes an authorization level of \$1.1 billion annually. This is the level of funding provided by Congress for the current program, the funding for which is expected to be fully expended by July 2024.