

Testimony – GLWA Meeting October 25, 2023

I am Mary Ellen Howard, a Sister of Mercy, a member of the People's Water Board, and a retired public health nurse.

I want to share some of the Advantages that I believe will accrue to GLWA with the passage of SBs 549-554 and HBs 5088-5093:

- Local Water Utilities will get paid 3% of monthly household income of their customers who are too poor to pay the full bill. Water utilities will be able to make up the shortfall between 3% and the true cost of providing the water by accessing a fund administered by DHHS. They will not have to pay to shutoff customers who cannot afford to pay their bills. And they will not have the moral burden of causing stress and harming the public health of their customers. The flow of water and the dignity of these customers will be maintained.
- I see every day the ineffectiveness of Current assistance programs. They might help a household get their water turned back on this month, but when next month's bill arrives, it's still unaffordable and they are unable to pay it. The utility will again shut off the water. This isn't working for anyone. We need a program that provides a long term solution for Michigan.
- Many water organizations (advocates like the PWBC, water utilities, municipalities, etc.) have spent 6 months crafting these bills, addressing problems with the current system, and investing in solutions. They are here, and hopeful that GLWA will support their work.
- We believe that the program proposed for Michigan provides a model that is being scrutinized and will be adopted by other states.

Many in Michigan, including me, are counting on GLWA to pass a resolution supporting the passage of SBs 549-554 and HBs 5088-5093. Thank you.

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