



THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT
OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Office of the General Manager

January 9, 2024

The Honorable Alex Padilla
United States Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

RE: Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) Establishment Act – Support

Dear Senator Padilla:

The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (Metropolitan) appreciates your leadership on water affordability issues and is grateful for your work to establish a permanent federal program to assist low-income residents with their water bills. Metropolitan is a regional water wholesaler and the largest distributor of treated drinking water in the world. Our 26 member agencies, either directly or through their sub-agencies, provide water to the nearly 19 million people living in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, and Ventura counties.

Metropolitan supports the “Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) Establishment Act” and would like to work with you to ensure this vital program is accessible to low-income households and workable for water utilities. The temporary assistance program established at the height of the COVID-19 emergency is about to expire but the need for a low-income water assistance program remains. As you are aware, water and sewer bills are rising more than twice as quickly as inflation and increasing faster than energy bills, medical expenses, and household incomes.

Sustained federal assistance to help low-income household afford their water bills is a public health imperative on par with home energy and nutrition assistance. Metropolitan encourages you to fully evaluate the effectiveness of the temporary LIHWAP program at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) before transferring the program to the Environmental Protection Agency. The HHS program leverages existing federal assistance programs to streamline the distribution of aid to low-income households and could be a workable model for a permanent federal program. HHS is currently gathering data on use of the temporary program and the lessons learned should be applied to the permanent program.

Metropolitan looks forward to working with you to advance the “Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program Establishment Act” and appreciates your recognition of the vital need for sustained assistance to help low-income households pay their water and sewer bills.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Adel Hagekhalil", written over a horizontal line.

Adel Hagekhalil
General Manager and Chief Executive Officer