**The Water Access Act**

***Leads****: Reps. Debbie Dingell (MI-6), Rashida Tlaib (MI-12), Lisa Blunt Rochester (DE-At Large)*

***Endorsements****: Alliance for the Great Lakes, American Human Rights Council (AHRC-USA), American Water Works Association (AWWA), Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies (AMWA), Center for Water Security and Cooperation (CWSC), Community Water Center, Detroit People’s Platform, EarthJustice, Flint Rising,* *Food & Water Watch, GreenLatinos, Michigan League of Conservation Voters, Malcolm X Grassroots Movement Detroit Chapter, Mothering Justice, National Association of Water Companies (NAWC),* *Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), Original United Citizens of Southwest Detroit, PolicyLink, River Network, Rural Community Assistance Partnership (RCAP), Water Collaborative of Greater New Orleans, We the People of Detroit*

The **Water Access Act** would direct $500 million to the Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) for FY2024, and follows an FY2024 appropriations letter sent to the House Appropriations Committee.

LIHWAP provides critical funding for low-income households with their water and wastewater bills. This program was essential during the COVID-19 pandemic, helping households keep their water on and their families safe.

Median water rates have risen by approximately 45% in the past decade, putting a strain on low-income households. Access to water is a foundational aspect of our society, and when households suffer economic hardship, we must step in and be available to help them maintain their essential water service. Access to running water is also critical for sanitation and hygiene – something we learned all too well during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Specifically, this program was created to help income-eligible households pay outstanding water and wastewater bills, providing up to $1,500 in direct payment assistance toward water and wastewater bills for household accounts in arrears or disconnect status, and/or assistance with reconnection fees when services have been disconnected. While this program has proven its ability to assist American households, we believe the program has the potential to have a wider impact, similar the Low-Income Household Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

LIHWAP’s existing funding is set to expire early next year. Initially designed to run through September 30, 2023, the program was extended by six months in July 2023 to states requesting a no-cost extension from HHS. The **Water Access Act**’s $500 million appropriation will allow this vital program to continue helping residents with water-related expenses.

If you’d like to cosponsor this bill, please contact Josh Shapiro in Rep. Dingell’s office at Shapiro@mail.house.gov.