

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 26, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Mr. President:

We commend your leadership since assuming office and have been proud to work with your Administration on all efforts to help crush the COVID-19 pandemic, while prioritizing continued relief for the American people. With the enactment of the American Rescue Plan we have survival checks going to families, unemployment insurance has been extended, and funding and resources are on their way to state and local governments nationwide. However, we are still midst of a serious ongoing public health crisis that demands universal access to clean water for all Americans.

Water is life. Water is an essential public good, especially in a pandemic. Access to clean and affordable drinking water is a basic human right, and we have a moral obligation to ensure no American is denied this right. States across this county are already loosening COVID-19 public safety restrictions and water shutoff moratoriums will be ending. This is alarming and deeply troubling, since COVID-19 is still spreading rampantly throughout communities in the United States and the public has consistently been told for over a year that washing our hands with soap and water is essential to stopping the spread. This need to guarantee access to water is further underscored by new research from Cornell University and Food & Water Watch that found that a robust nationwide water shutoff moratorium for the duration of the pandemic would have prevented nearly 500,000 COVID-19 infections and saved the lives of approximately 9,000 Americans. Therefore, we strongly urge you and your administration to take any and all actions within your power to institute a national water shutoff moratorium that would extend, at least, through the end of the COVID-19 global health pandemic.

In the coming days, the state of Michigan's ban on water shutoffs for residential customers will expire on March 31st. Water debt has soared during the pandemic in Michigan and states across the country, posing serious problems for low-income customers and for water systems alike. We understand this is a challenging issue for our communities and utilities, but it is one we must urgently address.

As we begin to shift from the relief phase to longer term recovery, we must work together to address the water debt crisis, avoid a catastrophic wave of water shutoffs, and prevent the bankruptcy of our nation's water systems as part of our recovery efforts. water system bankruptcies. As we work to find consensus on the next phase, the most important and effective step we can take is to ensure that the water stays on by instituting a nationwide shutoff moratorium. If we are unable to enact a life-saving moratorium, it is critical that those water

systems that take care of their low-income customers and keep the water flowing get first priority for any recovery funds.

Again, thank you for your continued efforts to lead us through, and one day out of, the COVID-19 public health and economic crisis, as well as your long commitment to water rights. If we are to truly Build Back Better for all future generations of Americans, we cannot deny anyone access to clean water—a basic human right—or allow water taps to be shutoff during a pandemic. Thank you for considering this urgent request and we look forward to working with you on this front.

Sincerely,



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress