

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 9, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, U.S. Capitol
Washington, DC, 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy,

We write to support funding for an ongoing federal water affordability assistance program. While Congress has provided a one-time allocation of federal water affordability assistance in American Rescue Plan, additional investments will be needed to ensure continued access to water for our constituents during the pandemic and the post-pandemic recovery.

Water is the most basic form of PPE--without it, families cannot wash their hands, cook a meal, bathe themselves, or even flush a toilet. For the communities we represent to safely shelter in place and halt the spread of this virus, we must make sure that they have access to safe and affordable water in their homes. Addressing the mounting crisis of water bill debt facing our communities will also be needed to ensure that all families are able to participate in our country's economic recovery.

In January 2021, the California State Water Resources Control Board found that 1.6 million California households were shouldering a stunning \$1 billion in water debt, with an average debt of \$500 dollars per person. Of these affected households, 155,000 were found to already carry over \$1,000 in debt. These high levels of water debt are disproportionately concentrated in low-income communities of color, the same communities hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic. This level of need dwarfs the entirety of the one-time December 2020 federal allocation of \$638 million for water affordability assistance nationwide, of which California is likely to receive only \$70 million.

Make no mistake, this is more than just a California issue – it is a national challenge that deserves our full attention and action. Over the last year, millions of households around the country have accumulated a debt burden that will dampen recovery efforts and extend the economic challenges of this pandemic. Just as water has been an essential tool to fight this virus, water affordability assistance is an essential tool in our recovery.

That is why we strongly support Congress acting to fund an ongoing federal water affordability assistance program that provides annual funding for assistance. This should be prioritized for action in 2021 and included in any infrastructure or economic recovery package. Because without ongoing access to safe and affordable water, there can be no equitable recovery.

Sincerely,



Josh Harder
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



Napolitano
Member of Congress



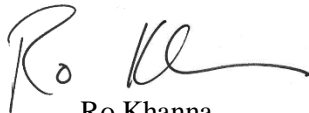
Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Mike Thompson
Member of Congress



Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Tony Cardenas
Member of Congress