

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 11, 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 services 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 and sanitation 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.

Nationally, increased drinking water bill delinquencies from COVID-19 related job losses are estimated at \$4.92 billion over one year.¹ Similarly, for clean water (sewer) service increased arrears from the pandemic are estimated at \$3.8 billion.² This combined \$8.7 billion level of need dwarfs the entirety of both the one-time December 2020 federal allocation of \$638 million for water affordability assistance nationwide and the additional \$500 million allocated in March 2021. In California alone, the California State Water Resources Control Board found that 1.6 million 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 consistent across the country and disproportionately concentrated in low-income communities of color, the same communities hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Make no mistake, this 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

¹ [Financial Impact of the COVID-19 Crisis on U.S. Drinking Water Utilities \(2020\)](#), AMWA, April 14, 2020.

² [Mitigating the Economic Cost of Maintaining Water and Wastewater Service in the Midst of a Global Pandemic and National Economic Shut-Down](#), NACWA, April 2020

included in any infrastructure or economic recovery package. Because without ongoing access to safe and affordable water services, there can be no equitable recovery.

Sincerely,



Josh Harder
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress




Grace Napolitano
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna
Member of Congress



Mike Thompson
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



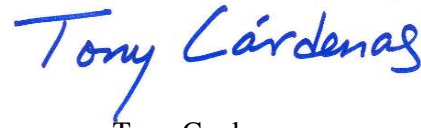
Nanette Barragán
Member of Congress



Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress



Emanuel Cleaver
Member of Congress



Tony Cardenas
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress

Raúl Grijalva
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress

Jim Costa
Member of Congress

Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

Albio Sires
Member of Congress

Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress

Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress

Donald Payne Jr.
Member of Congress

Al Lawson
Member of Congress

Deborah K. Ross
Member of Congress

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jesús G. García". The letters are fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial 'J'.

Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Doyle". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Mike Doyle
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark Pocan". The signature is stylized and somewhat abstract, with a large circular flourish at the end.

Mark Pocan
Member of Congress