



City of Chicago



SR2020-291

Office of the City Clerk

Document Tracking Sheet

Meeting Date: 4/24/2020

Sponsor(s): Villegas (36)

Type: Resolution

Title: Call for U.S. Congress to enact and fund national water affordability program modeled after Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program

Committee(s) Assignment: Committee on Economic, Capital and Technology Development

SUBSTITUTE

RESOLUTION CALLING FOR FEDERAL FUNDING OF SUSTAINABLE WATER PLAN

WHEREAS, Mayor Lori Lightfoot and Chicago's City Council have prioritized safe and healthy water for all Chicagoans. This has become especially important given the deadly impacts of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic and the disproportionate impacts on our most vulnerable communities; and

WHEREAS, The need for a subsidy to support long term, sustainable, and affordable access to water and sewerage services for the benefit of low-income residential customers will not end after the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS, Congress should create and fund a national water rates subsidy program similar to the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP); and

WHEREAS, The LIHEAP program receives and expends approximately \$3.5 billion annually to support gas and electric heating utility costs for low income residents throughout the United States; and

WHEREAS, Based on the same realities that lead the federal government to recognize the need to support low-income families by subsidizing energy, it is time to also provide a robust federal subsidy for the precious resource of clean and safe drinking water; and

WHEREAS, Unfortunately, due to the high cost of providing treated, safe engineered drinking water, based largely on complying with federal regulations, this resource is seeing an alarming rise in retail rates across the country. While there is often a call for municipalities to become the "water bank" and provide free or subsidized water, the federal government must be a leader in partnering with municipalities and states to fund necessary water subsidies for low-income families, as demonstrated by the popular and successful LIHEAP program; and

WHEREAS, Affordable water is a health, safety, and welfare issue that is implicitly recognized not only by the recent reconnection of water services to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, but also by the existence of the LIHEAP program for low-income electric and gas home heating. Water also needs to be recognized and supported as a human right for our most vulnerable residents as a utility that is directly tied to the support of life; and

WHEREAS, Going forward, with adequate funding from federal, state, and local sources via a water assistance program modeled on LIHEAP, Water and sewer departments should develop more broadly based, comprehensive and institutionalized policies to deal with the affordability of its services, their accessibility to all Americans, and the resulting key community public health issues arising out of the provision of water and sewerage services in an urban environment; and

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That the Chicago City Council urgently calls for Congress to enact and fund a national water assistance program, modeled on the LIHEAP program for home heating assistance for low income families; and BE IT FURTHER

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That copies of this resolution shall be provided to Senators Dick Durbin and Tammy Duckworth along with Congressman Bobby Rush, Congressman Robin Kelly, Congressman Daniel Lipinski, Congressman Jesús García, Congressman Mike Quigley, Congressman Danny Davis, Congressman Jan Schakowsky.

Gilbert Villegas
Alderman, 36th Ward