



New York Water Environment Association, Inc.

The Water Quality Management Professionals

525 Plum Street, Suite 102 • Syracuse, New York 13204
(315) 422-7811 • Fax: 422-3851 • www.nywea.org

2020

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23 March 2020

Senator Charles E. Schumer
322 Hart – Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Schumer,

I write to urge you to support the negotiations underway to include in the CARES Act a provision to provide assistance to low-income ratepayers of drinking water and wastewater utilities through the LIHEAP program. It is our understanding that this expansion of the LIHEAP program will be temporary during the coronavirus crisis, and the State LIHEAP offices were surveyed by their Association last week and are confident they could administer additional funds for water expeditiously. Many State LIHEAP offices are already connected to their local water utilities, who often have their own local customer assistance programs. LIHEAP advocacy groups also support this effort.

Not only will this be a way to provide significant assistance to low-income ratepayers financially struggling during this crisis, it will assist drinking water and wastewater agencies that are playing a central role in protecting public health and maintaining economic stability in communities during the coronavirus pandemic. Like the rest of the nation, most utilities will be hit hard financially by coronavirus. From the wastewater side, preliminary data estimated a \$12.5B hit to clean water utility revenue over a year – that reflects a 20% reduction in revenue. In response to the crisis, utilities around the country are suspending water shut-offs and restoring connections for water service to delinquent accounts, accepting a financial loss in restoring those accounts because of the critical role sanitation plays in protection of public health. Providing LIHEAP assistance for unpaid bills will both help low-income residents as well as financial assistance to utilities doing all they can to help their communities.

We urgently request that you support low-income ratepayer assistance in the next stimulus. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact our Executive Director, Patricia Cerro-Reehil (pcr@nywea.org).

Sincerely,

William J. Nylic, III
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