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A PROPOSED RESOLUTION

IN THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

To declare the sense of the Council for Congress to enact and fund a national water affordability program, modeled on the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), for home heating assistance for low-income families as a component of federal COVID-19 relief.

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, That this resolution may be cited as the “Sense of the Council for Supporting Congressional Approval of a Federal Sustainable Water Affordability Program Resolution of 2020”.

Sec. 2. The Council finds that:

(1) In May 2020, the Council of the District of Columbia advocated that DC Water, one of the largest municipal water filtration systems in the United States serving the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. region, continue providing D.C. residential customers, current and delinquent accounts, with full service including reconnecting all occupied residential properties with water service strategic to addressing the personal hygiene needs and health emergency requirements associated with the deadly impacts of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic.

(2) The need for a subsidy to support long-term, sustainable and affordable access to water and sewerage services will have enormous benefits towards the health of all who reside in the District, particularly beneficial to households engaged in service and hospitality trades, many with lower incomes, yet as essential everyday workers, they account for the greatest

25 medical risks, frequently leading to expiration during the current COVID-19 pandemic, therefore
26 accessing municipal water service must be addressed with urgency through a national wholistic
27 solution of new policies, removing elements of unaffordability and access to clean affordable
28 water service for financially challenged residents and small residential property owner requires a
29 permanent solution to maintaining the public health of the community.

30 (3) Congress should create and adequately fund a national water rates subsidy
31 program similarly to the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

32 (4) The LIHEAP program receives and expends approximately \$3.5 billion
33 annually to support gas and electric heating utility costs for low-income residents throughout the
34 United States.

35 (5) Based on the same realities that led the federal government to recognize the
36 need to support low-income families by subsidizing energy, it is time to also provide a robust
37 federal subsidy for the precious resource of clean and safe engineered drinking water.

38 (6) The high cost of providing clean and safe drinking water, at an alarming rise
39 in retail rates across the country, adversely affecting municipalities ability to provide free or
40 subsidized water, the federal government is the proper entity to fund necessary water subsidies
41 for low-income families, as demonstrated by the popular and successful LIHEAP program.

42 (7) Affordable water is a health and safety issue that is implicitly recognized not
43 only by the recent reconnection of water services to aid in the mitigation of the COVID-19
44 pandemic, but also by the existence of the LIHEAP program for low-income electric and gas
45 home heating. Water also needs to be recognized and supported for our most vulnerable residents
46 as a utility that is directly tied to the support of life.

47 (8) Congress is presently deliberating another one or more tranches of relief

48 funding for COVID-19- related expenses. The funding of water and sewer infrastructure should
49 be included as a public health benefit.

50 Sec. 3. It is the sense of the Council that:

51 (1) Congress should enact and fund a national water affordability program,
52 modeled on the LIHEAP program for home heating assistance for low-income families; and

53 (2) Significant and adequate funding for a national water affordability program
54 benefiting low-income water customers and public health should be an urgent, primary focus of
55 Congressional COVID-19 relief funding.

56 Sec. 4. The Council shall transmit a copy of the resolution to Mayor Muriel Bowser, DC
57 Congressional Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton, Congressional Representatives Nancy Pelosi
58 and Kevin McCarthy, Senators Mitch McConnell and Charles Schumer, the board of DC Water,
59 media representatives, and affordable water advocates.

60 Sec. 5. This resolution shall take effect immediately upon the first date of publication in
61 the District of Columbia Register.