



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA CITY COUNCIL

March 18, 2021

SUBMITTED VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Chairperson Sonny Popowsky
Philadelphia Water, Sewer, and Storm Water Rate Board
1515 Arch Street, 17th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Chairperson Popowsky:

The undersigned members of Philadelphia City Council respectfully ask that you reject the proposed water bill increase by the Philadelphia Water Department (PWD) so that no families must choose between heat, food, or water while facing a public health crisis. As you know, more than one in four customers have fallen behind on bills during this pandemic, and more than 60,000 residential households have fallen so far behind that they risk water service shutoff.

On February 18, Councilmember Maria Quiñones Sánchez sent the enclosed letter to Commissioner Randy Hayman, asking that the PWD reconsider its rate proposal, leverage recent state investments and forthcoming federal funds, and sign up thousands of cost-burdened families eligible yet unenrolled for income-based water bills through the Tiered Assistance Program.

On February 26, Commissioner Hayman responded to Councilmember Quiñones Sánchez with the enclosed letter, maintaining the Department's proposed rate increase and providing that "we do not know for certain at this time how much aid may be allocated to Philadelphia and whether any of the funds would be provided to the Water Department to offset revenue loss."

On March 11, President Joseph Biden delivered substantial aid to Philadelphia when he signed into law the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, which makes clear that its \$1.4 billion allocation to the City of Philadelphia can be used to make improvements in water and sewer infrastructure, and which further provides water bill assistance of up to \$1000 per tenant as well as rental and homeowner assistance resources that qualify utility bills as eligible expenses. Additionally, PWD recently submitted department expenditures to the City for reimbursement under the CARES Act. We are confident these resources provide the PWD the certainty that it seeks to offset revenue loss.

In conclusion, City Council asks that you help us keep thousands of families in their homes by rejecting a water rate increase that will directly cause housing insecurity. We ask that you instead direct the PWD to work with us to leverage existing resources for capital improvements.

Respectfully,

Councilmember Mark Squilla, 1st District
Councilmember Kenyatta Johnson, 2nd District
Councilmember Jamie Gauthier, 3rd District
Councilmember Curtis Jones, Jr., 4th District
Council President Darrell L. Clarke, 5th District
Councilmember Bobby Henon, 6th District
Councilmember Maria Quiñones Sánchez, 7th District
Councilmember Cindy Bass, 8th District
Councilmember Cherelle Parker, 9th District
Councilmember Brian J. O'Neill, 10th District
Councilmember Kendra Brooks, At-Large
Councilmember Allan Domb, At-Large
Councilmember Derek Green, At-Large
Councilmember Katherine Gilmore Richardson, At-Large
Councilmember Helen Gym, At-Large
Councilmember David Oh, At-Large
Councilmember Isaiah Thomas, At-Large

Cc: Mayor James F. Kenney
Water Commissioner Randy Hayman

Enclosures:

02.24.21 Hayman to MQS re Rate Increase
02.18.21 MQS to Hayman re Rate Increase