

May 15, 2020

The Honorable Patty Murray
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Washington State Congressional Delegation,

Thank you for your leadership to confront the public health and economic crisis caused by COVID-19. We are grateful for your support of our communities amid this public health emergency. The need for safe, reliable water for drinking and sanitary services is particularly critical during this time. We are ensuring that every customer has access to safe, clean, reliable water during the pandemic.

However, the COVID-19 crisis has triggered declining revenues and increased costs for drinking water and wastewater, and a significant infusion of federal funding is needed to support utilities in their ongoing work to protect public health and the environment. As Congress works on the next phase of assistance for the coronavirus response, water and wastewater utilities across Washington state urge Congress to prioritize funding for utilities consistent with the following priorities:

Assistance for Low-Income Customers: With so many Washington residents and businesses suffering unprecedented economic hardship because of the coronavirus outbreak, more utility customers are finding it hard to pay their bills, yet access to clean water for hand washing and sanitation is critical to stop the spread of COVID-19. We request federal assistance to help utilities maintain services to low-income and struggling households during the pandemic.

Federal Assistance to Help Mitigate Lost Utility Revenues: We need access to federal funds to maintain utility operations that are affordable to customers. Across the nation, water utilities are estimated to see revenue reductions and cost increases of up to \$14 billion, which is nearly a 17-percent average direct impact on utility budgets; and public clean water agencies will face a \$12.5 billion loss of revenue due to COVID-19. Water utilities of all sizes in the state are struggling, with the possibility of smaller, rural water systems failing entirely. We request funding to utilities to help with costs related to water service disconnections, reconnections of delinquent accounts, customer bill assistance programs, and the impact of business shutdowns during the pandemic.

Capital Project Funding: We urge Congress to provide targeted grants and forgivable loans, through EPA's Drinking Water and Clean Water State Revolving Funds, to help utilities and municipalities rehabilitate or replace aging water and wastewater infrastructure.

Unlike transportation, the water and wastewater sectors have limited federal grant sources and rely on ratepayers who pay 80 to 90 percent of the costs. Water and wastewater utilities must continue providing these essential services despite the financial challenges utilities are incurring due to falling revenue from declines in usage from commercial and industrial users, maintaining service to delinquent ratepayers who cannot afford their bills, and moving forward whenever possible with near-term critical infrastructure projects. Funding water infrastructure projects is a smart and sustainable way to help keep rates affordable, construct needed capital projects, bolster the nation's economic recovery, and create and sustain well-paying jobs.

On behalf of Washington's water and wastewater utilities and the residents we serve, we thank you for your consideration of our requests and appreciate all you are doing to help Washingtonians and others in our nation during these challenging times.

Sincerely,

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Alderwood Water & Wastewater District

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CEO
Association of Washington Cities

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General Manager
Greater Bar Water District

Michael Jones
City Manager
City of Blaine

Tom Knuckey
Director, Public Works & Utilities
City of Bremerton

Mike Amburgey
General Manager
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Steve Wright
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Chelan County Public Utility District

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Water Division
City of Yakima

Cc:

The Honorable Jay Inslee
Governor
State of Washington

Laura Watson
Director
Washington State Department of Ecology

John Wiesman
Secretary of Health
Washington State Department of Health

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Honorable Adam Smith
U.S. House of Representatives
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Honorable Rick Larsen
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Jamie Herrera Beutler
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Derek Kilmer
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Denny Heck
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Honorable Suzan DelBene
U.S. House of Representatives
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Honorable Dan Newhouse
U.S. House of Representatives
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Honorable Pramila Jayapal
U.S. House of Representatives
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Honorable Kim Schrier
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