



February 7, 2024

The Honorable Alex Padilla
Member, U.S. Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) Establishment Act — SUPPORT

Dear Senator Padilla,

On behalf of the Rural County Representatives of California (RCRC), we write to express our support for the *Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) Establishment Act* to establish a national, low-income water assistance program. RCRC is an association of forty rural California counties and the RCRC Board of Directors is comprised of elected supervisors from each of those member counties.

California's rural counties greatly benefitted from the Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program when it was established by Congress on an emergency basis to help households afford drinking water and wastewater services during the COVID-19 pandemic. When LIHWAP expired in September of last year, however, we recognized it was the end of a program that was critical to our rural residents and to families throughout our state. LIHWAP was a groundbreaking program because it recognized the public health and economic imperative of maintaining water services, including and especially during a public health emergency like the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, as water and sewer bills have continued to rise beyond the reach of many of our residents, the need for continuing this water assistance program has never been greater.

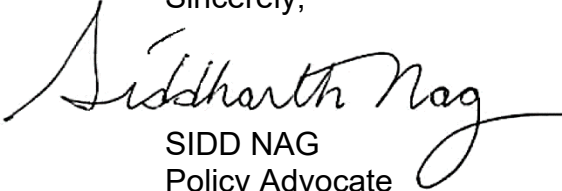
The LIHWAP Establishment Act would formally put in place LIHWAP to assist low-income households in paying arrearages and other rates charged to such households for drinking water or wastewater services. Like the original program, benefits under this legislation would be targeted towards households with low incomes and that have the highest home water burdens and importantly, allow for recipients of programs such as the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program, SNAP, TANF, SSI, and means-tested Veterans programs to be categorically eligible for LIHWAP assistance.

The Honorable Alex Padilla
Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) Establishment Act
February 7, 2024
Page 2

We appreciate your leadership in introducing this legislation and look forward to working with you as Chair of the Senate Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Fisheries, Water, and Wildlife to ensure families across the country have access to clean and affordable drinking water and sanitation services.

For the above reasons, RCRC is pleased to support the Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program Establishment Act. Please do not hesitate to contact me at snag@rcrcnet.org with any questions.

Sincerely,



SIDD NAG
Policy Advocate

cc: Katie Wheeler Mathews, California Governor's Office, Washington D.C.
Joaquin Esquivel, Chair, California Water Resources Control Board