



October 4, 2024

Dear Vice President Harris,

As the Water Affordability Coalition, we write to highlight the importance of the Low Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and ensure it receives adequate funding under your leadership. The program is essential in helping American families across the country continue to access clean, reliable, and affordable drinking and sanitary water services. In addition, LIHWAP funding helps water systems invest in critical infrastructure that will allow them to continue serving their communities and ratepayers for decades to come. With these benefits in mind, we call on you to ensure that this program is reauthorized and fully funded under your leadership.

LIHWAP was created in 2020 and received additional funding through the American Rescue Plan. Since its establishment, the program has assisted 1.7 million low-income households in maintaining their water service.¹ Unfortunately, the program has since expired and has not received additional funding from Congress to continue, dealing a great blow to Americans suffering from the water affordability crisis. Polling shows that one in three adults struggle to pay their water bill on time, and an overwhelming majority (77 percent) of Americans support federal assistance to help pay water bills, particularly as rising costs impact households and drive higher prices for services across all facets of their lives.² The LIHWAP program is a critical lifeline for low and moderate-income Americans struggling to afford these rising costs, including the nearly 15 percent of veterans who live below 150 percent of the poverty threshold and are eligible for LIHWAP assistance.³

Since its establishment, more than 13,000 water and wastewater systems across the country have utilized LIHWAP. This program allows these systems to support their ratepayers and invest in the infrastructure necessary to meet the needs of households well into the future. Estimates show that \$1.3 trillion of investment in our water infrastructure is needed over the next two decades to maintain current service levels.⁴ A dedicated funding line for LIHWAP in the President's Budget and annual appropriations bill is imperative to help water systems meet this investment need, and we ask that you work with Congress to ensure this program receives funding independent of other cost-assistance programs at HHS.

In closing, we ask that you focus on continuing and strengthening programs that address the affordability crisis while also meeting our future infrastructure needs. LIHWAP is supported by numerous

¹ <https://lihwap-hhs-acf.opendata.arcgis.com/>

² <https://www.awwa.org/Policy-Advocacy/Communications-Outreach/Value-of-Water>

³ <https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/ssb/v66n2/v66n2p1.html>

⁴ <https://www.epa.gov/cwns/clean-watersheds-needs-survey-cwns-2022-report-and-data>
https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2023-09/Seventh%20DWINSAs_September2023_Final.pdf

local and state governments and public health organizations, all of whom recognize the program's ability to deliver meaningful benefits to the American people. As such, we ask that a Harris Administration commit to supporting LIHWAP's reauthorization at HHS and ensure that it is fully and independently funded.

Sincerely,

American Water Works Association
Association of Metropolitan Water Agencies
National Association of Clean Water Agencies
National Association of Water Companies
Water Environment Federation