

October 26, 2023

Dear Representative Pohutsky and the Natural Resources Committee:

My name is Roslyn Walker and I'm a Detroit resident who has lived for more than 7 years on the eastside in District 4. I am also a mother and grandmother who, at times, could not afford my water bills and lived without water.

I'm also a renter who's been required by my landlord to pay a water bill that is not in my name. In fact, the water bill that comes to my house is in someone else's name – a person I don't know – and my landlord has required me to pay it or risk eviction. Last month, I was able to enroll in the DWSD Lifeline Program when I learned I could get the water bill in my name and get affordable payments without my landlord's interference.

I want other residents, including family and friends, that live in other counties to be able to do this too. People like me are struggling to pay for water, sewage, and stormwater drainage bills that we cannot afford.

I know this first hand because I have been working for the last 2 months with a team of PWBC volunteers to talk to residents about their water bills. We have reached out to over 120 people door-to-door, at grocery stores, at dollar stores, and at schools while parents wait for their kids. Actually, I started doing door-to-door outreach in 2018 even during the pandemic.

What I'm hearing from people is that they are afraid.

78% of them are renters and 68% of them say they are responsible for a water bill that the landlord is supposed to pay. They don't want other people to know they sometimes don't have water, especially their landlords or child protective services. 63% of people said their biggest water worry is that they can't afford to pay the monthly bill. And 41% of them also told us that they are not aware of water programs that can help.

Low-income residents in this state need the water affordability program regardless of where they live. We have fought for many years for this basic human right and we want to pay bills we can afford. None of us are asking for free water.

I ask you to support the water affordability bill package because it will make a huge difference in my life and that of other families for long-term water affordability and protections to keep us safe, healthy, and allow us to work and go to school without worries. Thank you!