

City of Philadelphia



Council of the City of Philadelphia
Office of the Chief Clerk
Room 402, City Hall
Philadelphia

(Resolution No. 251036)

RESOLUTION

Authorizing the Joint Committees on Housing, Neighborhood Development, and the Homeless and on Transportation and Public Utilities to hold hearings to investigate the impacts of unaffordable water bills on residential tenants in Philadelphia and to seek out best practices, policy changes, and new ideas to make water affordability and assistance programs more available for residential tenants.

WHEREAS, Access to safe and affordable water is essential to live in a home; and

WHEREAS, Water rates and charges in Philadelphia can present a hardship for low-income households; and

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia Water Department (PWD) and Philadelphia Water Revenue Bureau (WRB) operate water affordability and assistance programs such as the Senior Citizen Discount and Tiered Assistance Program to help eligible customers afford their bills; and

WHEREAS, The Utility Emergency Services Fund (UESF) provides grants to help customers who have fallen behind on their water bills; and

WHEREAS, In order to qualify for PWD's and WRB's water affordability programs or for UESF's grant assistance, a household must qualify as a customer and have the water bills listed in the name of a household member; and

WHEREAS, Tenants living in individually metered dwellings, such as rowhomes, can possibly qualify to be customers with their names listed on the water bills but may face obstacles, including, without limitation: and

- The landlord's lack of an active rental license;
- The landlord's objection to, or lack of cooperation with, the tenant's request to have the water bill listed in the tenant's name; and
- The lack of clarity in a residential lease regarding the tenant's responsibility for water.

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WHEREAS, Tenants who are required to reimburse their landlords for water bills can end up paying more for water because they cannot access an affordability program or water bill assistance; and

WHEREAS, Low-income tenants who are required to pay more for water face unhealthy tradeoffs, such as sacrificing nutritious food or necessary medication to use scarce financial resources to avoid falling behind in their rental obligations; and

WHEREAS, The risk of unaffordable water bills presents an acute issue for affected tenants, who may face eviction or displacement if they cannot access financial assistance; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, Hereby authorizes the Joint Committees on Housing, Neighborhood Development, and the Homeless and on Transportation and Public Utilities to hold hearings to investigate the impacts of unaffordable water bills on residential tenants in Philadelphia and to seek out best practices, policy changes, and new ideas to make water affordability and assistance programs more available for residential tenants.

..End

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CERTIFICATION: This is a true and correct copy of the original Resolution, Adopted by the Council of the City of Philadelphia on the twenty first day of November, 2025.

Kenyatta Johnson
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Elizabeth McCollum
CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmember Gauthier

Sponsored by: Councilmembers Gauthier, Phillips, Landau, Lozada, Brooks, Harrity, O'Rourke, Driscoll and Squilla