

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Committee on Law and Government to conduct hearings about how “TAP,” the nation’s first income-based water bill program, will allow low-income Philadelphians to earn forgiveness of past debts upon timely payments to the Philadelphia Water Department.

WHEREAS, on November 19, 2015, City Council unanimously passed Bill No. 140607-AA, establishing a low-income water bill program, now known as the Tiered Assistance Program, or “TAP,” under which monthly bills are calculated as a percentage on household income, in recognition that affordable water is a basic necessity and a fundamental human right; and

WHEREAS, TAP has been nationally recognized for tethering repayment to the ability to pay, for ensuring that qualifying customers are enrolled in the program, for protecting water access and promoting water conservation; and for keeping thousands of families in their homes; and

WHEREAS, TAP now sends affordable, income-based water bills to more than 15,000 low-income households across the City of Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, Bill No. 140607-AA provides that TAP participants shall earn forgiveness of arrearages, in order to build a pathway to equity through continued compliance; and

WHEREAS, City Council believes that a vital component of TAP is the elimination of uncollectible water debt, which compounds poverty and jeopardizes housing stability; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia Water Department set forth plans to establish an arrearage forgiveness program before the Philadelphia Water, Sewer, and Storm Water Rate Board, which affirmed that Bill No. 140607-AA calls for the development of an arrearage forgiveness program; and

WHEREAS, City Council desires to work with the Philadelphia Water Department to provide parameters for the earned forgiveness component of TAP; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby authorizes the Committee on Law and Government to hold hearings to consider how TAP will empower low-income Philadelphians to earn forgiveness of past debts.