

Legislation Text

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Authorizing the Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development, and the Homeless to conduct hearings to consider how programs and policies of the Philadelphia Water Department and the Philadelphia Department keep cost-burdened families safe and healthy in their homes.

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia Water Department operates the City's water and wastewater systems, and is responsible for the provision of safe, affordable water service to Philadelphia residents; and

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia Department of Revenue is responsible for billing and collecting charges for water and wastewater services provided by the City; and

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia Department of Revenue operates the Tiered Assistance Program (TAP), mandated by Bill No. 140607-AA, which recognizes low-income households right to affordable water by providing for income-based water bills and the earned forgiveness of water debt; and

WHEREAS, From July 1, 2017 through December 2018, the Philadelphia Department of Revenue approved more than 20,000 applications for income-based bills through TAP; and

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia Water Department and Department of Revenue have proposed regulations to permit TAP customers to earn forgiveness of pre-TAP principal and penalty charges; and

WHEREAS, The City Council of Philadelphia recommends a robust earned forgiveness program, pursuant to Bill No. 140607AA, to unlock a pathway to compliance and equity for cost-burdened households; and

WHEREAS, The Philadelphia Water Department maintains a moratorium policy against the termination of water service for nonpayment of delinquent bills from December 1 to March 31 of each year; and

WHEREAS, The City Council of Philadelphia is concerned about issues vital to housing security including: enrollment, recertification, and customer status of TAP customers; robust earned forgiveness guidelines; liens or foreclosure actions against TAP customers; and shut offs during the winter moratorium; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, THAT THE CITY COUNCIL OF PHILADELPHIA, Authorizes the Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development, and the Homeless to hold hearings to consider how programs and policies of the Philadelphia Water Department and Department of Revenue programs and policies can expand and improve to keep families in their homes.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Committee on Housing, Neighborhood Development, and the Homeless shall consider and recommend substantial changes to programs and policies, in order to: increase TAP enrollment; streamline and automate TAP recertification; unlock tenant access to water affordability; erase destabilizing water debt for cost-burdened households; protect low-income homeowners against foreclosure; and assist low-income customers in conserving vital resources.

