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Boscola Looks to Create a Permanent Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) in Pennsylvania

By Senator Lisa Boscola

If you've looked at a utility bill anytime in the past six months, you know that prices are skyrocketing, and there's little relief in sight. Constituents like you have been expressing your fear, frustration, and demands with my office for months.



Recently, I unveiled Senate Bill 363, to create a permanent Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP) in Pennsylvania. This initiative builds on the success of the federal LIHWAP, which provided critical relief for low-income households during the COVID-19 recovery. Over two years, the federal program helped 1.6 million households nationwide maintain access to essential water services, including 240 households in Bethlehem supported by \$150,000 in assistance.

Water affordability is a growing crisis, with 20% of households nationwide in debt to their water utility. A 2024 OCS report found that in Pennsylvania, the average total unpaid water utility debt is \$473.92—placing the Commonwealth among the top five states in customer arrears. Meanwhile, many families hovering around the federal poverty level spend up to 40% of their income on water and sewer bills. Rising costs driven by aging infrastructure and regulatory requirements make it increasingly difficult for vulnerable households to afford this essential service.

If federal funding returns or a dedicated stream of state dollars emerge, being ready with a state-level LIHWAP would address these challenges, protecting Pennsylvania's most vulnerable residents and supporting the financial health of water utilities. This program would ensure equitable access to water, safeguard public health, and strengthen community stability.

Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program (LIHWAP)

Goals

The proposed Pennsylvania LIHWAP aims to:

- Ensure equitable access to water for low-income households.
- Safeguard public health by preventing service disconnections.
- Strengthen community stability by reducing water-related financial stress.
- Support the financial health of water utilities by reducing arrears.

Legislative Status

Introduced: December 2, 2024, as SB 363 (later SB 767).

Co-sponsors: Includes Senators Bartolotta, Schwank, Comitta, Flynn, Haywood, Kearney, Pennycuik, and Costa.

Status: Referred to CONSUMER PROTECTION AND PROFESSIONAL LICENSURE, March 3, 2025.



Tips to prevent Lyme Disease



Walk in the center of trails



Use EPA-registered repellents containing DEET, picaridin, IR3535, Oil of Lemon Eucalyptus, para-menthane-diol or 2-undecanone



Bathe or shower within 2 hours after coming indoors to find and wash off ticks



Check your entire body for ticks with a mirror after returning from outdoors



Examine your gear and pets to keep ticks from being brought inside



Tumble dry clothes on high heat for 10 minutes to kill ticks on clothing



Content source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention