

May 7, 2021

The Honorable Bill Dodd
State Capitol, Room 2082
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 222 (Dodd) Water Rate Assistance Program
AAP-CA Position: SUPPORT

Dear Senator Dodd,

The American Academy of Pediatrics, California (AAP-CA) representing over 3,000 pediatrician members strongly supports SB 222, as amended on May 3, 2021, which would establish a fund to provide water affordability assistance to low-income ratepayers and ratepayers experiencing economic hardship in California.

The United Nations has recognized access to water and sanitation as a basic human right.¹ Existing California law states that “every human being has the right to safe, clean, affordable, and accessible water adequate for human consumption, cooking, and sanitary purposes.”² However, the cost of water has been rising at six times the rate of inflation according to the State Water Resources Control Board,³ and a recent report from the San Francisco Chronicle⁴ found that the financial crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic has left nearly 1.6 million households across the state unable to pay their water bills. Water debt in the state comes to 1.2 billion dollars. As households face the prospect of their water being cut off, state water agencies face running out of funds.

The Water Rate Assistance Program would provide direct water bill assistance, water bill credits, and water crisis assistance where needed. This would reduce the strain on households and ensure that they have access to water -- a basic human right -- by providing water affordability assistance, for both drinking water and wastewater services, to low-income ratepayers.

AAP-CA strongly supports SB 222. Thank you for your public service and leadership on behalf of the health and wellbeing of children, youth, and families in California.

Sincerely,



Melissa Ruiz, MD FAAP
Member, State Government Affairs Committee
American Academy of Pediatrics, California

cc: AAP Leadership

¹ <https://www.unwater.org/water-facts/human-rights/>

² https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/hr2w/

³ <https://www.kqed.org/science/1920428/californians-are-struggling-to-pay-for-rising-water-rates>

⁴ <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/water-crisis-looms-as-california-households-struggle-to-pay-bills/ar-BB1cU6yR>