

Metropolitan Planning Council

July 2, 2019

Office of Governor J.B. Pritzker
207 State House
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Governor Pritzker:

Affordable water is a fundamental right for all people. To ensure that Illinois makes good on this right, we urge you to sign SB1724 and fund it with an adequate appropriation.

SB1724 (Sen. Harris/Rep. Ford) requires a study that addresses a critical question for affordable water: what are the causes of Illinois' highly variable and sometimes unaffordable water rates? As detailed in the *Chicago Tribune's* "Water Drain" series, we know water rates in the Lake Michigan service area are generally on the rise, but at very different paces throughout the region. This variation results in some communities having water rates well beyond what their residents and businesses can reasonably pay. To properly address this affordability problem, we need a clear, systematic understanding of how water rates are set. We currently lack this factual grounding.

SB1724 fills this gap in understanding by collecting objective data about water rates, first in the Lake Michigan service area, and eventually for the whole state.

- Objective experts at the University of Illinois – Chicago will carry out the study. They are enthusiastic about the expertise they can bring to this question.
- The study will investigate the causes of increasing water rates, identify affordability challenges, and determine whether increased collaboration among units of government can create fairer rates.
- The study team will deliver a report of their findings to the Illinois General Assembly.
- The report will solicit input from stakeholders in state government, municipal utilities, and non-profit environmental and health organizations.

Signing and funding SB1724 is an essential first step in ensuring affordable water rates in Illinois. We welcome the opportunity to help all of us understand more about this important issue, and we thank you for your concern for overburdened residents and for your leadership.

Sincerely yours,



MarySue Barrett

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