

May 20, 2021

Chair Spiegel and Board of Supervisors
Riverside County
4080 Lemon St, 5th Floor
Riverside, CA 92501

RE: Request for immediate relief for 2020 past-due public water and sewer customers

Dear Chair Spiegel and Riverside County Board of Supervisors,

On behalf of our customers who are experiencing financial hardship created by the COVID-19 pandemic, the undersigned water and wastewater (sewer) service providers respectfully request \$25 million in direct relief from Riverside County's American Relief Plan Act (ARPA) State and Local Funding allocation.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to profoundly impact many aspects of our communities, including our residents and businesses who continue to struggle to pay their utility bills. As of March 2021, the total combined number of past-due customer accounts within the undersigned agencies is almost 70,000, of which includes more than 210,000 county residents and nearly \$34 million owed by our customers.

Unlike property owners and investor-owned utility companies such as Southern California Edison and SoCalGas, Proposition 218 prohibits water and sewer service providers from subsidizing the water and sewer bills of any customer with revenue received from any other paying customers. In other words, **public utilities are legally prohibited from forgiving any or all of a customer's past-due balance.**

Additionally, while other forms of federal, state, and local water and sewer relief programs are currently available to customers, we have collectively received only about \$185,000 from CAP CARES in utility assistance. While this is greatly appreciated, you can see we still have a long way to go in providing billing relief for customers.

With this in mind, we respectfully urge the Board to help alleviate our financially stressed customers' water and sewer debt with a one-time allocation of \$25 million of the County's ARPA State and Local Relief directly to water and wastewater providers. Our request is within the legal framework of how the funds can be applied (ARPA statute P.L. 117-2, section 602) and specifically states that a direct transfer of funds to a special unit of government, such as special district that provides water and wastewater service. This was confirmed by the Department of Treasury guidance that was released on May 10, 2021 (31CFR Part 35, RIN 1505-AC77, page 105). Our request to support 2020 arrearages is a little over five percent of the \$479.874 million allocated to Riverside County from the federal government. By directing funds to public utility providers, we can provide the fastest relief possible to your constituents and prioritize customers who need the most help.

We look forward to hearing from you so that staff can offer further information and discuss next steps. For more information about this collective request, please contact Craig Miller, General Manager of Western Municipal District and Chair of the Riverside County Water Task Force, at cmiller@wmwd.com or 951.571.7242.

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Very Respectfully,



Craig Miller
General Manager
**Western Municipal
Water District**



Robert Grantham
General Manager
**Rancho California
Water District**



Chris Berch
General Manager
**Jurupa Community
Services District**



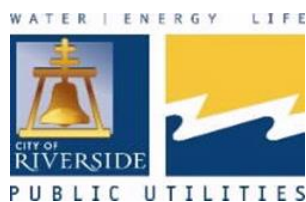
Greg Thomas
General Manager
**Elsinore Valley Municipal
Water District**



Joe Mouawad
General Manager
**Eastern Municipal
Water District**



Jeff Sims
General Manager
**Rubidoux Community
Services District**



Todd Corbin
General Manager
Riverside Public Utilities



Tom Moody
General Manager
**Corona Department of
Water and Power**



Andy Okoro
City Manager
City of Norco

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Jeff Pape
General Manager
**Temescal Valley
Water District**



Janey Gress
General Manager
**Home Gardens
Sanitary District**



Mike Gow
General Manager
**Lake Hemet Municipal
Water District**



Katie Evans
*Director of Communications
and Conservation*
**Coachella Valley
Water District**



Trish Rhay
General Manager
Indio Water Authority



Arden Wallum
General Manager
**Mission Springs
Water District**



Mark S. Krause
*General Manager-
Chief Engineer*
Desert Water Agency

Cc: The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
The Honorable Alex Padilla
The Honorable Ken Calvert
The Honorable Darrell Issa
The Honorable Raul Ruiz
The Honorable Mark Takano