

September 12, 2022

The Honorable Governor Gavin Newsom
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, CA 95814
Email: leg.unit@gov.ca.gov

Re: SB 222 (Dodd) Framework for Statewide Water Affordability Assistance Program –
REQUEST FOR SIGNATURE

Dear Governor Newsom:

SPUR respectfully requests your signature on SB 222 (Dodd). SB 222 would establish a first in the nation statewide Low-Income Water Rate Assistance Program to ensure that all Californians can access safe drinking water and wastewater services regardless of income.

Bill assistance for water has lagged behind assistance for other essentials such as food and energy. It has slipped under the radar for three main reasons: water, historically, was inexpensive; California has a fragmented system of 3,000 drinking water and nearly 800 wastewater systems; and Proposition 218 has tied the hands of local water systems who have capacity and interest in offering bill assistance.

With climate change, water affordability can no longer be pushed to the back burner. To adapt to more frequent and severe droughts and floods, drinking water and wastewater utilities will likely need to raise rates to update their infrastructure. This expected increase in water rates will place a disproportionate burden on low-income households.

Without statewide low-income water bill assistance, the state will be in a bind: push local agencies to foot the bill for climate resilience at the expense of their most vulnerable customers; or step in and foot the bill itself out of state funds.

California needs a pathway to raise local revenue to adapt water infrastructure to the stresses of climate change without making water unaffordable for low-income customers. A statewide water bill assistance is key to unlocking local water ratepayer dollars for climate resilience.

SPUR requests your signature on SB 222 and thanks you for your leadership on realizing the Human Right to Water.

Sincerely,

Laura Feinstein
Sustainability and Resilience Policy Director
SPUR
lfeinstein@spur.org