To require the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency to carry out a residential emergency relief program to provide payment assistance for households to retain water service, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mrs. Dingell introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on ____________________

A BILL

To require the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency to carry out a residential emergency relief program to provide payment assistance for households to retain water service, and for other purposes.

1 Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

2 SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

3 This Act may be cited as the “Water Debt Relief Act of 2021”.

May 18, 2021 (9:58 a.m.)
SEC. 2. EMERGENCY RELIEF PROGRAM.

Part F of the Safe Drinking Water Act (42 U.S.C. 300j–21 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following new section:

“SEC. 1466. EMERGENCY RELIEF PROGRAM.

“(a) EMERGENCY RELIEF PROGRAM.—The Administrator shall establish and carry out a residential emergency relief program to provide payments to public water systems to reimburse such public water systems for providing forgiveness of arrearages and fees incurred by eligible residential customers before the date of enactment of this section to help such eligible residential customers retain water service.

“(b) CONDITIONS.—To receive funds under this section, a public water system shall agree to—

“(1) except as provided in paragraph (2), use such funds to forgive all arrearages and fees relating to nonpayment or arrearages incurred by eligible residential customers before the date of enactment of this section;

“(2) if forgiveness of all arrearages and fees described in paragraph (1) is not possible given the amount of funds received, use such funds to reduce such arrearages and fees for each eligible residential customer by, to the extent practicable, a consistent percentage;
“(3) take no action that negatively affects the credit score of an eligible residential customer, or pursue any type of collection action against such eligible residential customer, during the 5-year period that begins on the date on which the public water system receives such funds; and

“(4) not disconnect or interrupt the service of any eligible residential customer as a result of non-payment or arrearages during such 5-year period.

“(c) ELIGIBLE CUSTOMERS.—To be eligible for forgiveness or reduction of arrearages and fees pursuant to the program established under subsection (a), a residential customer of a public water system shall have accrued new arrearages on or after March 1, 2020.

“(d) ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES.—The Administrator may authorize—

“(1) States to implement the program established under subsection (a); and

“(2) a State implementing such program to use up to 4 percent of funds made available to carry out such program in such State for administrative expenses.

“(e) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—There is authorized to be appropriated to carry out this section $4,000,000,000, to remain available until expended.”.