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The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

I write today regarding water shut offs in New York. I appreciated your announcement in March that utility companies in New York had voluntarily agreed to not turn off service during the COVID-19 pandemic. I urge you to expand upon this action by issuing an immediate statewide moratorium on water shut offs that would apply to local governments as well. This would provide relief for those struggling to pay their water bills.

I understand that some local governments have agreed to restore water services during the COVID-19 outbreak despite a resident's nonpayment; but only after the water has already been shut off. I strongly believe local governments should refrain from shutting off water in the first place. Local governments should also waive reconnection fees, rate hikes, and late fees during this time when families are struggling to pay for essential services, including running water. I ask that this moratorium remain in place for 180 days after the end of the COVID-19 declared emergency.

California, Michigan, and Washington currently require proactive water restoration by all water systems in their states, and I believe New York should do the same. Clean water is essential to keep our communities safe and healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic. Cleanliness, proper sanitization, hand washing, and good hygiene are central to stopping the spread of the coronavirus. Immediate action is needed to protect populations disproportionately impacted by water shut offs including predominantly low-income households, communities of color, and those unable to pay their bills due to layoffs or lost wages during this crisis.

I want to thank you, all our state employees, and your entire team for your hard work and leadership during these uncertain times. I appreciate your attention to this, and I look forward to hearing from you regarding this important issue.

Sincerely,

Sean M. Ryan
Member of the New York Assembly