

MOTION

The COVID-19 crisis has reaffirmed what many have already known. Whether it's data of COVID-19 case rates, data from the CalEnviroScreen showing environmental justice inequities, or data showing households of poverty - over and over again it is the same communities, from the Northeast San Fernando Valley to South LA to the Harbor that are historically and disproportionately impacted. During this pandemic in particular, low-income workers from these communities have either been hardest hit because of loss of jobs, or they are putting themselves and their families at elevated risks of exposure because they tend to be critical workers, or are jeopardizing their health by going to work to make ends meet.

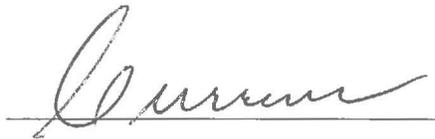
LADWP has taken active steps to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, including assisting customers avoid shut-off, or reconnect services during the pandemic. However, a growing concern for low-income ratepayers is the accumulation of debt they are experiencing because they cannot keep up with their bills during this crisis. For so many low-income Angelenos who struggle to live paycheck to paycheck, the concern is two-fold: keeping up with bills now, and how to catch up on bills when the crisis is over. A program should be created targeted at low-income customers, particularly those in the most burdened communities, to address this. After all, the pursuit of debt collection from an individual with no resources is an exercise in futility, and has generally been an example of how systemic racism can disproportionately affect certain communities.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the Department of Water and Power be instructed to report to Council with a proposal for a debt relief and forgiveness program for low-income ratepayers who have fallen behind on their bills, including as a result of COVID-19. This program should include bill stabilization efforts for low-income ratepayers to also prevent new debt from being accumulated by ensuring the amount of their utility bill remains at an affordable level based on a percentage of monthly income.

PRESENTED BY:

  
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SECONDED BY:



ORIGINAL

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