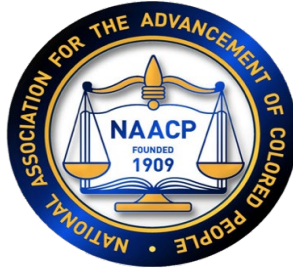


NAACP ILLINOIS STATE CONFERENCE

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July 28, 2020

The Honorable Tammy Duckworth
524 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Duckworth,

On behalf of our 10,000 thousand NAACP members in Illinois, we write to thank you for introducing S. 2596, The Voluntary Partnerships for Distressed Communities Act of 2019, with Senator Braun of Indiana. Your bill will bring millions of Americans and communities safer more affordable drinking water. Access to safe, clean and affordable drinking is a priority of the NAACP under our Environmental Justice initiative.

Thousands of utilities are out of compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act and failing to support these water systems puts public health at risk. Many of these systems predominantly serve low income and black communities, further exacerbating the systemic racism built into the very infrastructure of this country. These communities have historically suffered from a disproportionate lack of investment, and traditional enforcement actions like fines drain resources from the community and do nothing to improve the quality of the drinking water.

Communities should devote their scarce resources to bring safe and affordable drinking water to their residents. Your bill would encourage Good Samaritan systems like American Water to voluntarily partner with struggling utilities by limiting the liability for the Good Samaritan, a common sticking point for this kind of partnership. Importantly, your bill prioritizes community control over water systems by ensuring that this voluntary decision be made solely by the effected community.

Companies such as American Water who value clean, safe and affordable water for communities can be a solution under this bill. In Illinois, the NAACP recognizes Illinois American Water as a responsible entity in our communities for their commitment to safe quality water and their work with minority businesses.

We commend you for your work on this important issue and stand ready to work with you, because all Americans deserve clean, safe, reliable, and affordable drinking water.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Teresa Haley'.

Teresa Haley
President, Illinois State Conference