

RESOLUTION CALLING ON THE CITY OF CHICAGO COMMITTEE ON FINANCE TO HOLD HEARINGS ON WATER BILLS WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF WATER MANAGEMENT AND THE DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE

WHEREAS, The City of Chicago (City) Department of Water Management (DWM) oversees and works to ensure the delivery of nearly 1 billion gallons of drinking water, along with the removal of waste and stormwater throughout the City and suburbs; and

WHEREAS, As a result of these services, in coordination with DWM, the Department of Finance (DOF) generates unified utility bills, more commonly referred to as "water bills," that include water and sewer charges, garbage fees, and water-sewer taxes; and

WHEREAS, In 2022, Elevate and the Metropolitan Planning Council, two nonprofits focused on sustainable and equitable development, published the "City of Chicago Water Affordability Analysis," revealing that lower-income neighborhoods and communities of color faced a disproportionate impact from these water bills, even when using less water or new technology, such as water meters; and

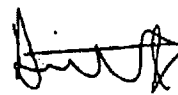
WHEREAS, CBS2 and other media outlets have shared concerning and shocking reports revealing unreasonable and inexplicable water bills for residents who have no plumbing issues or excessive water use, leaving many in distress and at the mercy of debt collectors; and

WHEREAS, In July 2022, the City Council passed O2022-2050, an ordinance intended to promote and ensure Chicago residents' fundamental rights to affordable and accessible water; and

WHEREAS, The ordinance included three major components: 1) prohibiting the future privatization of Chicago's water system; 2) codifying the end of residential water shut-offs due to non-payment; and 3) increasing transparency requirements; and

WHEREAS, Unclear billing practices and a lack of adequate technology and data sharing between the DWM and the DOF continue to result in confusion, angst, and financial hardship, necessitating additional transparency; and, now therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED, That we the Members of the City Council, call on the Committee on Finance to hold hearings with the Department of Water Management, the Department of Finance, and other impacted parties to provide the City Council with an opportunity to hear and question their efforts in addressing these water bills, outline plans to lessen their burden on Chicagoans, and ensure statements are fair and reflective of actual water usage.


GILBERT VILLEGAS
Alderman, 36th Ward

