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**CITY COUNCIL PASSES ORDINANCE PROMOTING WATER ACCESS,  
AFFORDABILITY, AND DATA REPORTING TRANSPARENCY**

*Enhanced laws prevent the future privatization of Chicago's water system, prohibits shut-offs for non-payment, and implements transparency reporting requirements for annual information on water affordability measures*

**CHICAGO** – Today, the City Council passed critical ordinance enhancements promoting water access and affordability for Chicago residents. Introduced by Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot, Department of Water Management (DWM), and the Department of Finance (DOF), the measures are part of the Mayor's longstanding commitment to addressing water access, affordability, and improving municipal services citywide.

The ordinance protects the long-term affordability of water in Chicago, ensures residents' fundamental rights to water access, and increases requirements to provide water affordability data reports to the City Council committees which oversee water management.

"These actions will guarantee that the City of Chicago is able to preserve water affordability for our residents in the years to come," said Mayor Lightfoot. "By strengthening, enhancing, and codifying the measures we have taken and continue to take, we will ensure that our residents retain their access to water and be able to further protect this precious resource."

The ordinance includes three major components:

**It prohibits the future privatization of Chicago's water system.** The ordinance secures that the Commissioner of the Department of Water Management (DWM) maintains the power and duties over the water and sewer systems -- promoting long-term affordability of water in Chicago and ensuring that the system remains a publicly owned asset into the future.

"In order to remain accountable to the people of Chicago, the water system must belong to the City," said Department of Water Management Commissioner Andrea



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Cheng. “We must have the flexibility to set our own policies and develop programming which promotes access and equity while maintaining the highest possible water quality.”

**The ordinance codifies the end of residential water shut-offs for non-payment.**

In 2019, Mayor Lightfoot implemented a moratorium on residential shut-offs due to non-payment to protect Chicago residents’ fundamental right to water access; this ordinance codifies that moratorium. DWM may still terminate water access in instances of waste, abuse of water supply, or any danger to public health, safety or the general well-being of the water system, and may still terminate water access for non-payment of any municipal, industrial, or commercial user.

**It increases requirements to provide transparency.** The ordinance implements new requirements to provide transparent reports to the City Council Committee on Budget and Government Operations and the Committee on Finance regarding water debt and several critical water affordability measures implemented by the City. This includes the total amount of arrears for a variety of property classifications, including single-family dwellings, two-unit residential structures, commercial structures, etc.; the number of water accounts in arrears and dollar value at various increments; the number of metered and non-metered accounts shut off by the City for any reason; the Utility Billing Relief program’s effectiveness, number of applicants for the program, and number of accounts enrolled in the program. When applicable, the report will categorize all information by ZIP Code.

“It’s important for us to share the relevant information about our programs,” said Comptroller Reshma Soni. “We want others to know how the success of these programs are impacting residents throughout the city so that we can continue to introduce and implement future programs that help Chicagoans most in need of financial relief.”

The enhancements follow the success of several water affordability programs already in place for a number of years. Since 2009, the [MeterSave](#) program has offered residents a free water meter installed by the Chicago Department of Water Management, a seven-year guarantee that their bill won’t be higher than it would be without a meter, and water conservation kits. The [Utility Billing Relief \(UBR\) Program](#), now in its third year, and managed by the Department of Finance, provides low-income City of Chicago residents with a 50% reduced rate on water, sewer, and water-sewer tax charges as well as debt relief for those who demonstrate they can manage the reduced rate bills for one year. The [Low-Income Household Water Assistance Program \(LIHWAP\)](#), a federally funded program administered by the Community and Economic Development Association of Cook



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County (CEDA), assists low-income households (including homeowners and renters) with paying their past due water and wastewater/sewer bills.

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