

A RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE ADMINISTRATION IMPLEMENT WATER AND WASTEWATER SERVICE SHUTOFF PROTECTIONS AND PAUSE ALL PAYMENT PLANS ISSUED BY THE FINANCE DEPARTMENT DURING THE INTERIM PERIOD WHILE THE URBAN LEAGUE OF GREATER ATLANTA IS ESTABLISHING THE DEKALB CUSTOMER ADVOCATE'S OFFICE

WHEREAS, the DeKalb County water and sewer system is a vital public utility, requiring substantial improvements and upgrades to meet federal consent decree obligations and address aging infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, amendments to the Water and Sewer Rate Structure offers the financial capacity to address aging infrastructure and years of deferred maintenance, which have led to increased operational costs and the need for significant investment in repairs and upgrades; and

WHEREAS, the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners recognizes that while rate increases are critical for long-term sustainability and reliability of water services, they can disproportionately impact vulnerable populations, including seniors, individuals with disabilities, and low-income families; and

WHEREAS, the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners believes that access to clean and affordable water is a fundamental human right essential for the health and well-being of all residents; and

WHEREAS, many seniors and disabled individuals often live on fixed incomes, making it challenging to absorb additional costs associated with essential services like water; and

WHEREAS, studies have shown that shutoffs and water affordability disproportionately affect Black, low-income, and disabled DeKalb residents; and

WHEREAS, low-income residents may already face financial hardships that could be exacerbated by increased utility costs, potentially leading to detrimental effects on their health and quality of life; and

WHEREAS, the Urban League of Greater Atlanta has been chosen by the DeKalb County Governing Authority to begin to implement a Customer Advocate's Office which aims to begin helping customers no later than January 1, 2026.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners requests the following provisions be incorporated into the DeKalb Water and Sewer Rate Increase Agenda:

Section A: Shutoff Protections

- 1) During the interim period while the Urban League of Greater Atlanta is establishing a Customer Advocate's Office, the Department of Watershed Management nor the Finance Department may not cut off water or wastewater service if, prior to the time that cut-off is to take place if any of the below apply:
 - a) The customer has submitted an application for the DeKalb County Water Rate Assistance Program (WRAP) and a determination of eligibility is pending; or the customer currently has a dispute with DeKalb County over water and sewer billing; or has a current payment plan with the DeKalb County Finance Department or with the Department of Watershed Management;

- b) The customer indicates that the customer or a member of the customer's household has a significant medical condition, as certified in writing by a licensed medical doctor, nurse practitioner, physician assistant, or DeKalb Public Health, indicating that the absence of water service at the subject's residential premises will aggravate the existing significant medical condition;
- c) The customer provides verifiable documentation that the customer or a member of the customer's household is 62 years old or older, the customer has primary custody of a human being not more than 18 years old in residence at the premises, or the customer or a member of the customer's household is disabled.

Section B: Pause on All Payment Plans Issued By the Finance Department

- 1) During the interim period while the Urban League of Greater Atlanta is establishing the DeKalb Customer Advocate's office, the Finance Department should not issue any payment plans for water and wastewater billing debt. Any billing dispute should be processed and will be adjudicated by the new Customer Advocate's Office.
- 2) The Finance Department should issue a pre-emptive pause on all current payment plans issued by the Finance Department, pending an affordability review. The purpose of the review is to ensure that each resident's total water bill, which includes the payment plan, does not exceed 4.5% of their income - the DeKalb standard for affordability.

ADOPTED by the DeKalb County Board of Commissioners, this ____ day of _____, 2025.

MICHELLE LONG SPEARS
Presiding Officer
Board of Commissioners
DeKalb County, Georgia

APPROVED by the Chief Executive Officer, this ____ day of _____, 2025.

LORRAINE COCHRAN-JOHNSON
Chief Executive Officer
DeKalb County, Georgia

ATTEST:

APPROVED AS TO SUBSTANCE:

BARBARA SANDERS-NORWOOD
County Clerk
Board of Commissioners and
Chief Executive Officer

ZACH WILLIAMS
Chief Operating Officer
DeKalb County, Georgia

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

WILLIAM J. LINKOUS III
County Attorney
DeKalb County, Georgia