

From: **Office of the Mayor**



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**CORRECTION**

**City of Cleveland and Cleveland City Council Issue Statement Regarding NAACP Water Affordability Report**

**CLEVELAND** – The City of Cleveland Division of Water and Cleveland City Council today released a statement on a water affordability report released by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund:

*“At Cleveland Water, we strive to ensure everyone in our community has access to safe drinking water and shares in the economic, social and environmental benefits of our system.*

*This is something we’ve been focusing on for some time. Water equity is so important to us, we put it in our mission statement and have created values to support that mission. We also joined the US Water Alliance Water Equity Taskforce – a network of six cities that work together to build a more equitable water future.*

*Locally, we are continuing to analyze data and evaluate our operations to ensure we are doing everything possible to keep customers in water service. This work is helping us identify particular parts of our service area where a larger portion of customers need our help.*

*We strongly believe all of our customers deserve to have safe, quality water that’s also affordable and have taken multiple actions to make that happen. We implemented 0% rate increases in 2016, 2017 and 2018, bill the first 1,500 gallons of water each month at a discounted rate, offer multiple discount programs to assist customers, and provide payment plans to help customers who are behind on payments.*

*We also transitioned to monthly billing, making it easier to efficiently budget, monitor water usage and detect water leaks quickly. This effort ultimately led to an overall decline in water disconnections.*

*We recognize that sometimes this still isn’t enough and some customers may fall behind on their water bill. When this happens, our customer service team is ready*

*to work with every customer to avoid water service interruptions. Our goal at Cleveland Water is to keep every single customer in water service.*

*If all of these efforts fail, we may have to disconnect water service. Before we disconnect a customer's water service, we send multiple notices including leaving a card on their door. These notifications provide customers an opportunity to contact us and set up payment arrangements, dispute the charges, or, if they reside in a residential, owner-occupied property, request a Water Review Board hearing.*

*The Water Review Board is an informal and neutral forum available to residential customers who receive a termination notice. Information regarding how to request a Water Review Board hearing is included on disconnection notices, door hangers, and the Cleveland Water website. At the hearing, customers can present evidence as to why their account should receive an adjustment. As requests are made, they are again reviewed for resolution. Many are resolved without the need for a hearing.*

*As a last resort, Cleveland Water may occasionally utilize tax liens to collect delinquent account balances. Generally, tax liens are used for collections after extensive efforts to work with customers on payment plans, tenant deposit agreements or other mechanisms have failed. This process involves certifying balances to the county tax bill for collection when individuals pay their taxes, however, Cleveland Water does not foreclose on homes.*

*Most commonly, the tax lien process is used when property owners – many times absentee landlords – have walked away from their property leaving the community with an abandoned home and Cleveland Water with no other collections recourse.”*

### **About the City of Cleveland**

The City of Cleveland is committed to improving the quality of life of its residents by strengthening neighborhoods, delivering superior services, embracing diversity and making Cleveland a desirable, safe city in which to live, work, play and do business. For more information on the City of Cleveland, visit online at [www.city.cleveland.oh.us](http://www.city.cleveland.oh.us) , Twitter at @cityofcleveland or Facebook at [www.facebook.com/cityofcleveland](http://www.facebook.com/cityofcleveland).