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## **Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner's office water affordability program kicks off new year donation drive with stories of residents it has helped**

*Amid growing need, county seeks public and private donations  
to sustain and expand program over time*

**OAKLAND COUNTY** — Building on the success of its initial phase, the Oakland County Water Resources Hardship Assistance Program is ringing in the new year by launching a robust campaign to encourage donations and ensure sustainable support for residents struggling to afford their water bills due to an unexpected financial hardship.

The program, designed to assist those who fall outside the eligibility for other assistance programs, has already made a tangible impact helping local residents avoid service disruptions and financial distress.

**Since its unveiling in May, the Hardship Assistance Program — geared for people whose income exceeds eligibility for other funding available for lower-income households — has approved 47 households and disbursed nearly \$42,400 in payments** to residents. The program, administered by the United Way for Southeastern Michigan in partnership with the Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner's office, was initially funded from the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) — Local Fiscal Recovery Funds allocated by the Oakland County Board of Commissioners.

The program's second phase focuses on raising funds through a donation campaign that will run throughout the holiday season and beyond. This initiative aims to create a safety net for families and individuals facing temporary hardships, emphasizing community solidarity during the season of giving.

"In the true spirit of the holidays, we're calling on our always generous community to join us in this critical effort now and throughout the year," said Oakland County Water Resources Commissioner **Jim Nash**. "Your support ensures that Oakland County residents, many of whom are just above the federal poverty threshold, can maintain access to clean, reliable water services when times are tough."

### **Real Stories, Real Impact**

#### **Arica Miller of Southfield**

A single working mother of three children, ages 15, 6 and 1, with another baby due in two months,

Miller works as an assistance eligibility specialist for a state agency that helps low-income families. Despite her role in assisting others, her income is just above the threshold to qualify for water aid programs.

Miller has always worked hard to pay her bills, but financial strains intensified after child support stopped, compounded by inflation driving up the cost of groceries, gas and other necessities.

“The cost of everything is going up, but my income hasn’t kept pace,” Miller said. “I help others get the assistance they need but couldn’t qualify for help myself until I was directed to this hardship program. It’s been a lifeline, allowing me to catch up on payments and focus on my children without constant fear of losing essential services.”

**John, an Oak Park resident who asked to be identified only by his first name**

A retired college professor, John found himself in an unexpected bind when a water leak caused his monthly bill to skyrocket. “The program stepped in when I needed it most,” he said. “Without their help, covering the cost would have disrupted my tight budget. It’s reassuring to know there’s support for seniors like me.”

**How to Donate**

Donations to the Hardship Assistance Program directly fund water and sewer bill relief for residents in need. Contributions also help cover plumbing repairs and eliminate past-due balances, ensuring access to essential services for Oakland County residents facing an unexpected temporary financial hardship.

To make a tax-deductible donation and learn more, visit [oakgov.com/WRCHardship](https://oakgov.com/WRCHardship).

**Why Your Support Matters**

**As the need continues to grow, donations are vital to sustaining and expanding the program’s reach.**

The expansion effort is crucial as more households in Oakland County face financial strains that put them at risk of losing access to essential water services. Approximately 22% of households in the county fall within the Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) standards, making them vulnerable to financial crises but not always eligible for assistance designed for families with lower incomes.

“Every dollar donated helps keep water running in homes across Oakland County,” Commissioner Nash said. “This isn’t just about bills — it’s about dignity, health and stability for our neighbors.”

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