



DETROIT CITY COUNCIL – DISTRICT 5 COUNCIL PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE MARY SHEFFIELD



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Statement on Efforts to Restore Water to Detroiters and Stop Shutoffs

While I applaud today's efforts to restore water to over 3,000 families who have had their service interrupted and attempts to prevent shutoffs by enrolling residents in the WRAP program, I, along with water advocates, long for the day when access to water is treated like the human right it is and that local and state officials move towards a more proactive approach of preserving and improving public health in Detroit. While today's announcement is a step in the right direction, tying these actions to the Covid-19 outbreak is short-sighted and is no substitute for sound public policy that will continue to protect residents beyond the current threat (which may already be past the point of prevention).

I recently drafted a resolution requesting a moratorium on shutoffs due to threats to public health and I have been working alongside water advocates for years to draft an ordinance which will guarantee that water is affordable for all Detroiters. Unfortunately, some have chosen to politicize the issue saying there is no data to support the connection between the lack of water and the spread of infectious disease. As a well-respected Doctor said in a recent Bridge magazine article, that notion is "backwards, anti-prevention, anti-science and anti-common sense." Thus, I still stand with the water advocates and the People calling for a moratorium on all water shut-offs and restoration for all low-income residents who cannot afford the current water rates. I also continue to stand with the water advocates and the People demanding a water affordability ordinance in the City of Detroit that ultimately protects public health and makes access to water affordable to all, irrespective of one's income level.

Again, while today is a good day for those of us fighting to make water a human right, we still have a lot of work to do to make it a reality. Hopefully, it won't take impending pandemics or the continued loss of life to see movement and real progress on this issue in the near future.

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Council President Pro Tempore Mary Sheffield represents the 5th District, which covers the lower eastside, downtown, the riverfront and central portions of Detroit. She is the chair of the Neighborhood and Community Services standing committee and a member of the Budget, Finance and Audit standing committee. She was first elected to office in 2013 and is the youngest person ever elected to City Council in the history of Detroit.

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