

DANIELLE FRIEL OTTEN, MEMBER
155TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

102B EAST WING
P.O. BOX 202155
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17120-2155
(717) 783-5009
FAX: (717) 772-2943

631 POTTSTOWN PIKE
EXTON, PENNSYLVANIA 19341
(484) 200-8259
FAX: (484) 200-8269



House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

COMMITTEES

AGING AND OLDER ADULT SERVICES
ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES AND ENERGY
HUMAN SERVICES

October 14, 2021

Rosemary Chiavetta, Secretary
Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission
Commonwealth Keystone Building
400 North Street
Harrisburg PA 17120

Re: Docket Nos. R-2021-3027385 and R-2021-3027386

Dear Secretary Chiavetta,

As Representative of the 155th state legislative district, I offer the following public comment in opposition to PUC Docket Numbers R-2021-3027385 and R-2021-3027386, proposed water and wastewater rate increases requested by Aqua America's operating entities.

I am particularly concerned with Aqua's admission that its primary reason for the requested increase is to recover \$1.1 billion it has spent to upgrade its distribution and treatment systems. Since 2016, Aqua has agreed to buy eight municipal water systems in the Philadelphia suburbs and has pending purchase offers for the DELCORA wastewater system and the Chester Water Authority. These completed and proposed acquisitions total another \$982 million. The PUC must investigate how these purchases have impacted the size of this new request, specifically whether Aqua adequately planned for necessary upgrades to the systems they have purchased, and, more broadly, how privatization of public water systems is affecting consumers' rates.

Another concern is the impact of climate change on infrastructure costs. Larger and more frequent storms with their subsequent runoff are straining water treatment plants, forcing utilities to make unplanned upgrades that have not been accounted for in financial projections. Has Aqua considered these costs and their impact on future rates in its plans to acquire additional municipal water systems? Most recently, Aqua's Pickering treatment plant was offline for 17 days because of flooding from Hurricane Ida, and customers in Chester and Delaware counties were asked to conserve water during that timeframe.

A third area that should be investigated is Aqua's billing structure for large industrial customers, including water service related to the construction of the Mariner East 2 pipeline. The PUC must ensure (1) that residential customers are not asked to bear the costs of any infrastructure upgrades undertaken to meet the high-volume demands of industrial customers, and (2) that

residential customers are not asked to offset revenue lost if industrial customers are given favorable rates.

I am grateful that the PUC has decided to suspend and investigate the proposed water and wastewater rate increases, and look forward to hearing the outcome of the investigations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Danielle Friel Otten". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

Danielle Friel Otten
State Representative
155th Legislative District