

Michigan Advisory Council on Environmental Justice

March 26, 2020

Dear Governor Whitmer:

The undersigned members of the inaugural Michigan Advisory Council on Environmental Justice appreciate your efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19 through a wide variety of measures. You appointed us to counsel you and your administration on environmental issues impacting low-income households and people of color. To that end, we believe your urgent action is needed to ensure that all Michiganders have access to affordable and safe drinking water during the growing COVID-19 pandemic.

In order to limit the spread of COVID-19, it is recommended that people frequently wash their hands and practice social distancing. However, people without running water will be forced to leave their homes in an attempt to find water at understocked and overcrowded grocery stores putting them in close contact with hundreds of others. What limited amounts of water people are able to obtain will primarily be used for drinking and cooking. For such people, frequent hand washing is simply not an option. With large numbers of residents being unable to follow basic public health recommendations, the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to rapidly spread throughout Michigan.

While the City of Detroit has committed to restoring water service and placing a moratorium on water shutoffs, few other water systems have followed suit. Thousands of people across the State are living without running water. This problem calls for your decisive action. Governors in Maryland, New Hampshire, Indiana, Colorado, Delaware, and Washington have issued Executive Orders requiring public water systems to provide safe and affordable water throughout the pandemic. In total, nearly 20 states other have issued orders making sure all residents have running water at this crucial time.

The COVID-19 pandemic represents an unprecedented crisis. With cases continuing to increase, it is necessary for all residents to be able to play their part in limiting the spread of COVID-19 by practicing social distancing and frequently washing their hands. However, for the thousands of Michiganders without running water this is not possible. We urge you to take the necessary action by issuing an executive order to ensure that all Michiganders have access to affordable and safe drinking water during the growing COVID-19 pandemic.

Monica Lewis Patrick

Monica Lewis-Patrick
We The People of Detroit

Nicholas Leonard

Nicholas Leonard, JD
Great Lakes Environmental Law Center

Justin Onwenu

Justin Onwenu
Sierra Club

Donavan McKinney

Donavan McKinney
Service Employees International Union

Theresa Landrum

Theresa Landrum
Original Citizens of Southwest Detroit

Paul Mohai

Paul Mohai, Ph.D
University of Michigan

Tony G. Reames

Tony G. Reames, Ph.D
University of Michigan

Bryan Lewis

Bryan Lewis
National Resource Defense Council

Bryan Newland

Bryan Newland
Bay Mills Indian Community

Sylvia Orduño

Sylvia Orduño
Michigan Welfare Rights

John Petoskey

John Petoskey
Grand Traverse Band

Keith Cooley

Keith Cooley
Principia, LLC

Frank Houston

Frank Houston
MAC- EJ Member

Salah Ali

Salah Ali
Michigan League of Conservation Voters

Mona Munroe-Younis

Mona Munroe-Younis
Environmental Transformation Movement of Flint