

## Study Details Challenges and Opportunities to Address Water Affordability in Ohio

Columbus, OH — Costs for basic water and sewer services are rising in communities throughout the country. Yet water stresses, and the costs to fix them, are not shared equally. A new report issued today by the Alliance for the Great Lakes and the Ohio Environmental Council finds that paying for basic water and sewer services is a challenge for many Ohioans across the state in both urban and rural areas.

The independent report, [Water & Sewer Service Affordability in Ohio: Assessment & Opportunities for State Policy](#), finds that in nearly 80 percent of Ohio communities, a month of basic water and sewer service requires more than eight hours of labor at minimum wage. In about 45 percent of Ohio communities, a household at the 20th income percentile must pay more than 10 percent of their disposable income for basic water and sewer service. The report was authored by Associate Professor Manuel Teodoro, PhD of Texas A&M University. Teodoro is a nationally recognized expert in analyzing utility rate equity and affordability.

“Ohio families are being forced to make economic trade-offs to pay water and sewer bills,” said **Crystal Davis, Policy Director for the Alliance for the Great Lakes**. “In a water-rich state situated along Lake Erie, it is unacceptable that people around Ohio and the Great Lakes cannot afford clean, safe drinking water in their homes.”

The report finds that while water affordability in Ohio is not specific to urban, suburban, or rural communities, the root causes are different in rural and urban communities.

In rural communities, small water utilities cannot scale-up infrastructure to meet demand results in higher cost, and lower income residents end up paying a higher proportion of their income for basic water and sewer services. In urban communities, drinking and sewer costs are disproportionately borne by communities of color which have been redlined and disinvested for decades which has led to high rates of income inequality. In turn, basic water and sewer costs account for a higher proportion of disposable income.

“Water stresses, and the costs to fix them, are not shared equally,” said **Pete Bucher, Water Resources Director for the Ohio Environmental Council**. “We need a state-wide conversation about this issue and an effort to develop comprehensive, statewide strategy to address water affordability for Ohio families.”

Suggested strategies to address water affordability in Ohio including the consolidation of Ohio’s current 1,187 water utilities and 923 sewer treatment facilities, changing rate structures to focus on encouraging low fixed charges, as well as development of local and statewide customer assistance programs to help low-income customers.

The full report and a brief fact sheet can be found [here](#).

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**About the Alliance for the Great Lakes:** The Alliance for the Great Lakes is a nonpartisan nonprofit working across the region to protect our most precious resource: the fresh, clean and natural waters of the Great Lakes. Learn more at [www.greatlakes.org](http://www.greatlakes.org)

**About the [Ohio Environmental Council](http://theoec.org):** The Ohio Environmental Council (OEC) is the state's most comprehensive, effective and respected environmental advocate for a healthier, more sustainable Ohio. The OEC develops and ensures the implementation of forward-thinking, science-based, pragmatic solutions to secure healthy air, land, and water for all who call Ohio home.

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