


**TO:** Chairman Freeman, Chairman Miller, and members of the House Local Government Committee

**FROM:** Jennie Shade, Senior Director of Government Relations 

**DATE:** April 8, 2025

**SUBJECT:** Support of HB 509 P.N. 491

I am writing on behalf of the Pennsylvania Municipal Authorities Association (PMAA), which represents over 700 municipal authorities across the Commonwealth. Our membership is comprised of a diverse range of entities that provide essential services to more than six million Pennsylvanians, including the delivery of drinking water and wastewater treatment services. These services are critical to the health, safety, and well-being of communities throughout our state.

PMAA supports HB 509 P.N. 491, which amends the Municipalities Financial Recovery Act to require a distressed municipality seeking to privatize its water or wastewater system to obtain approval from 75% of the surrounding municipalities served by the system. This bill ensures that consumers directly impacted by the privatization of public water and sewer systems have a meaningful voice in the decision-making process.

The privatization of essential infrastructure, especially utilities like water and sewer systems, can have significant consequences, particularly regarding affordability and access to services. Studies have shown that privatization leads to increases in household water and sewer rates of up to 59% or more, placing an undue burden on residents, especially in financially vulnerable communities. It is crucial that ratepayers – those who rely on these systems – are well-informed and have the opportunity to voice their concerns through their elected municipal officials.

To further emphasize our support, PMAA has adopted the following resolution as part of our 2025 advocacy platform:

***Resolution 3-25***

*RESOLVED, That PMAA supports efforts to preserve public ownership of infrastructure by educating the ratepayer and the public about the benefits of publicly owned infrastructure, including delivering affordable, safe, and quality service, and ensuring the community understands the vital importance of public ownership of its natural resource, a basic human right.*

Public ownership ensures accountability, transparency, and protection of residents' interests, while promoting long-term sustainability for these vital services. By educating ratepayers and raising public awareness, PMAA aims to preserve the integrity of our communities' infrastructure and safeguard the public's right to access these services without the risk of inflated costs or substandard quality.

On behalf of our members, we respectfully ask that you **support** HB 509 P.N. 491. This legislation is a critical step toward empowering communities and protecting public infrastructure, ensuring that decisions regarding water and sewer systems are made in the best interest of the people they serve. Thank you for your consideration of this important issue. We also extend our appreciation to **Representative Kazeem** for her leadership on this matter.

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***About PMAA***

*For more than 80 years, the Pennsylvania Municipal Authorities Association (PMAA) has been the primary voice of community-based services representing the interests of more than 2,600 municipal authorities across the Commonwealth. Services provided by the Association include advocacy on governmental affairs issues, education and training, and member benefit programs.*