

DANIELLE FRIEL OTTEN, MEMBER
155TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

34 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
TOLL-FREE: (833) 787-3176
FAX: (484) 200-8269



House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

COMMITTEES

EDUCATION
ENVIRONMENTAL & NATURAL RESOURCE PROTECTION
GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT
HEALTH
HUMAN SERVICES
LIQUOR CONTROL

May 7, 2026

Mr. Stephen M. DeFrank, Chairman
PA Public Utility Commission
Commonwealth Keystone Building
400 North Street
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Re: Docket Numbers [A-2025-3058927](#), [A-2025-3058928](#), [A-2025-3058929](#)

Dear Chair DeFrank,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on the proposed merger of Essential Utilities and American Water Works Company.

On behalf of my constituents and every other potential customer of this merged utility, I urge the Public Utility Commission to **reject the merger** for the following reasons:

- Water customers across Pennsylvania already face high rates and frequent rate increases. The proposed merger threatens to accelerate this trend. Essential Utilities and American Water claim the merger will create economies of scale and keep bills affordable, but past mergers and privatizations have resulted in higher rates for consumers, not lower.
- Essential and American Water Works are already two of the largest water and wastewater utilities in the United States. This merger would give the new entity outsized control over every aspect of the market, affecting ratepayers, municipalities, and water system employees.
- The merger of Essential Utilities and American Water Works would eliminate competitive checks and bargaining power for local communities that consider water and wastewater privatization in the future. We've already seen the damage caused by Act 12 of 2016, which has failed to protect consumers and ratepayers. In late 2023, Pennsylvania's then-Consumer Advocate Patrick Cicero [testified that more](#)

than \$1 billion had been added to the utility rate base since the passage of Act 12, a figure nearly twice the depreciated original cost of the acquired systems' assets.

Water is not a luxury; it is a necessity. And in Pennsylvania, clean water is a right. The fewer private entities that control access to this essential natural resource, the more our constitutional rights come under threat. Water customers don't have a choice of provider. We need the PUC to be a check on the system and provide consumer protections.

If the Commission approves this merger, it must impose strict, enforceable requirements to protect ratepayers and municipalities, including multi-year rate freezes, infrastructure investment timelines, transparency requirements, service quality guarantees, and meaningful penalties for missed benchmarks.

Pennsylvania residents and all water utility customers deserve safe, reliable water at an affordable rate. Thank you again for the opportunity to comment and for your consideration of these remarks.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Danielle Friel Otten". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Danielle" being the most prominent.

Danielle Friel Otten
State Representative
155th Legislative District