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Democratic Caucus Administrator



Senate of Pennsylvania

COMMITTEES

AGRICULTURE & RURAL AFFAIRS,
DEMOCRATIC CHAIR
APPROPRIATIONS
GAME & FISHERIES
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

May 21, 2026

Dear Chairman DeFrank:

I am writing in regard to the proposed merger between Pennsylvania American Water Company (PAWC) and Essential Utilities. I would first like to thank the Pennsylvania Utility Commission (PUC) and the distinguished judges for providing residents of the Commonwealth with the opportunity to comment on this requested merger. This process is so vitally important in ensuring that the public has a forum in which they can make their voices heard on an issue which not only impacts their daily financial wellbeing, but also their accessibility to a utility necessary to daily life.

While there was not a public input hearing within the 11th Senatorial District, the consequences of this merger would have a direct impact on my constituents, especially those PAWC consumers in Exeter Township. I testified this past January in opposition to a proposed rate from PAWC, as I have repeatedly over the course of my tenure, and the overarching theme of my testimony has remained the same: enough is enough. On a seemingly biannual basis, consumers of PAWC get hit with rate increase after rate increase. Basis necessities such as our utilities, groceries, and gasoline continue to become more expensive. This is not merely a financial matter; this is an affordability crisis threatening accessibility to a basic necessity of life.

If approved, this merger would impact approximately 3.5 million water and wastewater customer connections, or more than 14 million people across 14 states. While a business is absolutely entitled to earn a fair return for the goods or services it provides, fairness also requires that a company focuses on delivering quality services at a reasonable rate.

Ratepayers, my constituents especially, cannot afford to further jeopardize their access to affordable and reliable utility services at the hands of companies seeking to get bigger and turn higher profits. The bottom line for many of my constituents is that they are feeling especially squeezed by the economic pressures of today and the affordability crisis before us. Frankly, many individuals and families are scared, and they have every reason to fear that this merger could bring with it higher bills and less accessibility.

Any conclusion that is reached must ensure that additional unnecessary hardship is not heaped upon citizens during a time of ongoing economic uncertainty when many are already unable to meet their basic financial needs. Thank you for your courtesy and consideration to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Judith L. Schwank".

Judith L. Schwank
State Senator – 11th District