Title: To amend the Safe Drinking Water Act and the Federal Water Pollution Control Act to establish pilot programs to assist low-income households in maintaining access to sanitation services and drinking water, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Low-Income Water Customer Assistance Programs Act of 2017”.

SEC. 2. LOW-INCOME DRINKING WATER ASSISTANCE PILOT PROGRAM.

Part E of the Safe Drinking Water Act (42 U.S.C. 300j et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“SEC. 1459C. LOW-INCOME DRINKING WATER ASSISTANCE PILOT PROGRAM.

“(a) Definitions.—In this section:

“(1) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term ‘eligible entity’ means—

“(A) a community water system; and

“(B) 3 or more community water systems that have entered into a partnership agreement or a cooperative agreement.

“(2) HOUSEHOLD.—The term ‘household’ means any individual or group of individuals who are living together as 1 economic unit.

“(3) LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLD.—The term ‘low-income household’ means a household—

“(A) in which 1 or more individuals are receiving—

“(i) assistance under a State program funded under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.);

“(ii) supplemental security income payments under title XVI of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1381 et seq.);

“(iii) supplemental nutrition assistance program benefits under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.); or

“(iv) payments under—

“(I) section 1315, 1521, 1541, or 1542 of title 38, United States Code; or

“(II) section 306 of the Veterans’ and Survivors’ Pension Improvement Act of 1978 (38 U.S.C. 1521 note; Public Law 95–588); or
“(B) that has an income that, as determined by the State in which the household is located, does not exceed the greater of—

“(i) an amount equal to 150 percent of the poverty level for that State; and

“(ii) an amount equal to 60 percent of the median income for that State.

“(b) Establishment.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall establish a pilot program to award grants to not fewer than 20 eligible entities to develop and implement programs to assist low-income households in maintaining access to affordable drinking water.

“(2) REQUIREMENT.—The Administrator shall award grants described in paragraph (1) to—

“(A) not fewer than 8 eligible entities that provide drinking water services to—

“(i) any city, county, or municipality at least 20 percent of the population of which is at or below the Federal poverty level; and

“(ii) a population of 1,000,000 or more residents;

“(B) not fewer than 6 eligible entities that provide drinking water services to—

“(i) any city, county, or municipality at least 20 percent of the population of which is at or below the Federal poverty level; and

“(ii) a population of 10,000 or more, but fewer than 1,000,000, residents; and

“(C) not fewer than 6 eligible entities that provide drinking water services to—

“(i) any city, county, or municipality at least 20 percent of the population of which is at or below the Federal poverty level; and

“(ii) a population of fewer than 10,000 residents.

“(3) LIMITATION.—A grant awarded under the pilot program shall not be used to replace funds for any existing similar program.

“(4) TERM.—The term of a grant awarded under the pilot program shall be not less than 10 years.

“(5) MINIMUM PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall develop, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, the minimum requirements for a program carried out by an eligible entity using a grant under this subsection.

“(B) INCLUSIONS.—The program requirements developed under subparagraph (A) may include—

“(i) direct financial assistance;

“(ii) a lifeline rate:

“(iii) bill discounting;

“(iv) special hardship provisions;
“(v) a percentage-of-income payment plan; or
“(vi) water efficiency assistance, including direct installation of water efficient
fixtures and leak repair, which may be completed through a contracted third party.

“(6) APPLICATION.—To receive a grant under this subsection, an eligible entity shall
submit to the Administrator an application that demonstrates that—
“(A) the proposed program of the eligible entity meets the requirements developed
under paragraph (5)(A);
“(B) the eligible entity has a long-term financial plan to fund the activities necessary
to achieve or maintain compliance with this Act; and
“(C) a grant awarded under this subsection would support the efforts of the eligible
entity to generate the necessary funds to achieve or maintain compliance with this Act
while mitigating the cost to low-income households.

“(7) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under this subsection, the Administrator shall give
priority to eligible entities—
“(A) that have reported health violations based on an exceedance of a maximum
contaminant level in 1 or more quarters since January 1, 2015;
“(B) the residential customers of which have experienced rate or fee increases for
drinking water, wastewater, or stormwater services greater than or equal to 30 percent
during the period beginning on the date that is 3 years before the date of enactment of
this section;
“(C) that—
“(i) develop an equivalent program, as determined by the Administrator, that is
administered separately by the eligible entity; or
“(ii) provide matching funds equal to or greater than the amount of the grant
from—
“(I) the applicable State or unit of local government; or
“(II) a State-sponsored nonprofit organization or private entity; or
“(D) that are eligible entities described in subsection (a)(1)(B).

“(8) LOWER INCOME LIMIT.—For purposes of this section, an eligible entity may adopt an
income limit that is lower than the limit described in subsection (a)(3)(B), except that the
eligible entity may not exclude a household from eligibility in a fiscal year based solely on
household income if that income is less than 110 percent of the poverty level for the State.

“(9) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—As a condition of receiving a grant under this
subsection, an eligible entity shall submit to the Administrator an annual report that
summarizes, in a manner determined by the Administrator, the low-income household
assistance program developed by the eligible entity using the grant amount, including—
“(A) key features;
“(B) sources of funding;
“(C) eligibility criteria;
“(D) participation rates;
“(E) the monetary benefit per participant;
“(F) program costs;
“(G) the demonstrable impacts on arrearage and service disconnection for residential customers, to the maximum extent practicable;
“(H) the amount by which the cost of drinking water services is reduced for participating low-income households, as a share of household income; and
“(I) a description of the manner in which the program supports the efforts of the eligible entity to generate funds necessary to maintain compliance with this Act.

“(c) Technical Assistance.—The Administrator shall provide technical assistance to each eligible entity that receives a grant under this section to ensure—
“(1) full implementation of the pilot program; and
“(2) maximum enrollment of low-income households.

“(d) Report.—Not later than 2 years after the date on which grant funds are first disbursed to an eligible entity under this section, and every 2 years thereafter for the duration of the terms of the grants, the Administrator shall submit to Congress a report on the results of the program established under this section.”

SEC. 3. LOW-INCOME WASTEWATER ASSISTANCE PILOT PROGRAM.

Title I of the Federal Water Pollution Control Act (33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.) is amended by adding at the end the following:

“SEC. 124. LOW-INCOME WASTEWATER ASSISTANCE PILOT PROGRAM.

“(a) Definitions.—In this section:
“(1) ELIGIBLE ENTITY.—The term ‘eligible entity’ means—
“(A) a municipality or public entity that owns or operates—
“(i) a publicly owned treatment works;
“(ii) a municipal wastewater treatment system; or
“(iii) a municipal separate stormwater sewer system; and
“(B) 3 or more municipalities or public entities described in subparagraph (A) that have entered into a partnership agreement or a cooperative agreement.
“(2) HOUSEHOLD.—The term ‘household’ means any individual or group of individuals who are living together as 1 economic unit.
“(3) LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLD.—The term ‘low-income household’ means a
household—

“(A) in which 1 or more individuals are receiving—

“(i) assistance under a State program funded under part A of title IV of the
Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.);

“(ii) supplemental security income payments under title XVI of the Social
Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1381 et seq.);

“(iii) supplemental nutrition assistance program benefits under the Food and
Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.); or

“(iv) payments under—

“(I) section 1315, 1521, 1541, or 1542 of title 38, United States Code; or

“(II) section 306 of the Veterans’ and Survivors’ Pension Improvement
Act of 1978 (38 U.S.C. 1521 note; Public Law 95–588); or

“(B) that has an income that, as determined by the State in which the household is
located, does not exceed the greater of—

“(i) an amount equal to 150 percent of the poverty level for that State; and

“(ii) an amount equal to 60 percent of the median income for that State.

“(b) Establishment.—

“(1) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall establish a pilot program to award grants to
not fewer than 13 eligible entities to develop and implement programs to assist low-income
households in maintaining access to affordable wastewater or municipal stormwater
services.

“(2) REQUIREMENT.—The Administrator shall award grants described in paragraph (1)
to—

“(A) not fewer than 7 eligible entities that provide wastewater or municipal
stormwater services to—

“(i) any city, county, or municipality at least 20 percent of the population of
which is at or below the Federal poverty level; and

“(ii) a population of 1,000,000 or more residents;

“(B) not fewer than 3 eligible entities that provide wastewater or municipal
stormwater services to—

“(i) any city, county, or municipality at least 20 percent of the population of
which is at or below the Federal poverty level; and

“(ii) a population of 10,000 or more, but fewer than 1,000,000, residents; and

“(C) not fewer than 3 eligible entities that provide wastewater or municipal
stormwater services to—

“(i) any city, county, or municipality at least 20 percent of the population of
which is at or below the Federal poverty level; and
“(ii) a population of fewer than 10,000 residents.

“(3) LIMITATION.—A grant awarded under the pilot program shall not be used to replace funds for any existing similar program.

“(4) TERM.—The term of a grant awarded under the pilot program shall be not less than 10 years.

“(5) MINIMUM PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS.—

“(A) IN GENERAL.—The Administrator shall develop, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, the minimum requirements for a program to be carried out by an eligible entity using a grant under this subsection.

“(B) INCLUSIONS.—The program requirements developed under subparagraph (A) may include—

“(i) direct financial assistance;

“(ii) a lifeline rate:

“(iii) bill discounting;

“(iv) a percentage-of-income payment plan; or

“(v) water efficiency assistance, including direct installation of water efficient fixtures and leak repair, which may be completed through a contracted third party.

“(6) APPLICATION.—To receive a grant under this subsection, an eligible entity shall submit to the Administrator an application that demonstrates that—

“(A) the proposed program of the eligible entity meets the requirements developed under paragraph (5)(A);

“(B) the eligible entity has a long-term financial plan to fund the activities necessary to achieve or maintain compliance with this Act; and

“(C) a grant awarded under this subsection would support the efforts of the eligible entity to generate the necessary funds to achieve or maintain compliance with this Act while mitigating the cost to low-income households.

“(7) PRIORITY.—In awarding grants under this subsection, the Administrator shall give priority to eligible entities—

“(A) that are affected by consent decrees relating to compliance with this Act;

“(B) the residential customers of which have experienced rate or fee increases for wastewater, stormwater, or drinking water services greater than or equal to 30 percent during the period beginning on the date that is 3 years before the date of enactment of this section;

“(C) that—

“(i) develop an equivalent program, as determined by the Administrator, that is administered separately by the eligible entity; or

“(ii) provide matching funds equal to or greater than the amount of the grant from—
“(I) the applicable State or unit of local government; or
“(II) a State-sponsored nonprofit organization or private entity; or
“(D) that are eligible entities described in subsection (a)(1)(B).

“(8) LOWER INCOME LIMIT.—For purposes of this section, an eligible entity may adopt an income limit that is lower than the limit described in subsection (a)(3)(B), except that the eligible entity may not exclude a household from eligibility in a fiscal year based solely on household income if that income is less than 110 percent of the poverty level for the State.

“(9) REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.—As a condition of receiving a grant under this subsection, an eligible entity shall submit to the Administrator an annual report that summarizes, in a manner determined by the Administrator, the low-income household assistance program developed by the eligible entity using the grant amount, including—

“(A) key features;
“(B) sources of funding;
“(C) eligibility criteria;
“(D) participation rates;
“(E) the monetary benefit per participant;
“(F) program costs;
“(G) the demonstrable impacts on arrearage and service disconnection for residential customers, to the maximum extent practicable;
“(H) the amount by which the cost of wastewater and stormwater services is reduced for participating low-income households, as a share of household income; and
“(I) a description of the manner in which the program supports the efforts of the eligible entity to generate funds necessary to maintain compliance with this Act.

“(c) Technical Assistance.—The Administrator shall provide technical assistance to each eligible entity that receives a grant under this section to ensure—

“(1) full implementation of the pilot program; and
“(2) maximum enrollment of low-income households.

“(d) Report.—Not later than 2 years after the date on which grant funds are first disbursed to an eligible entity under this section, and every 2 years thereafter for the duration of the terms of the grants, the Administrator shall submit to Congress a report on the results of the program established under this section.”.

SEC. 4. NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR NATIONWIDE RURAL AND URBAN LOW-INCOME COMMUNITY WATER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

(a) Definitions.—In this section:

(1) ADMINISTRATOR.—The term “Administrator” means the Administrator of the
Environmental Protection Agency.

(2) LOW-INCOME HOUSEHOLD.—The term “low-income household” means a household—

(A) in which 1 or more individuals are receiving—

(i) assistance under a State program funded under part A of title IV of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 601 et seq.);

(ii) supplemental security income payments under title XVI of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1381 et seq.);

(iii) supplemental nutrition assistance program benefits under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (7 U.S.C. 2011 et seq.); or

(iv) payments under—

(I) section 1315, 1521, 1541, or 1542 of title 38, United States Code; or

(II) section 306 of the Veterans’ and Survivors’ Pension Improvement Act of 1978 (38 U.S.C. 1521 note; Public Law 95–588); or

(B) that has an income that, as determined by the State in which the household is located, does not exceed the greater of—

(i) an amount equal to 150 percent of the poverty level for that State; and

(ii) an amount equal to 60 percent of the median income for that State.

(b) Study; Report.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 2 years after the date of enactment of this Act, the Administrator shall conduct, and submit to Congress a report describing the results of, a study regarding the prevalence throughout the United States of low-income households that do not have access to—

(A) affordable wastewater or municipal stormwater services; or

(B) affordable public drinking water services to meet household needs.

(2) INCLUSIONS.—The report under paragraph (1) shall include—

(A) recommendations of the Administrator regarding the best methods to increase access to affordable wastewater, stormwater, and drinking water services;

(B) a description of the cost of each method described in subparagraph (A);

(C) with respect to the development of the report, a consultation with all relevant stakeholders; and

(D) a description of the results of the study with respect to low-income renters who do not receive bills for wastewater, stormwater, and drinking water services but pay for the services indirectly through rent payments.