



Mike DeWine, Governor
Jon Husted Lt. Governor
Laurie A. Stevenson, Director

June 12, 2020

TO: Ohio Mayors

RE: Ohio EPA's March 31 Order to Public Water Systems in Ohio

First and foremost, allow me to thank you for your leadership and cooperation in working with our agency in the implementation of Ohio EPA's March 31 order, applicable to public water systems across the state during the COVID-19 pandemic. With so many of our fellow Ohioans suddenly struggling to make ends meet, quick and decisive action was needed to help ensure that Ohioans had access to safe drinking water, especially during this time. Prior to the issuance of the order, many of you had implemented local measures within your communities to ensure ongoing access to water for your citizens during COVID-19. Again, we thank you for this leadership.

As you are aware, I issued orders on March 31st which required that, statewide: (1) no public water system customers be disconnected from their water service for reasons of non-payment; (2) that anyone who had been disconnected as of January 1, 2020 be reconnected; and (3) that any such reconnection was to occur without a charge to the customer. HB 197, passed by the General Assembly on March 25, granted the director of Ohio EPA temporary authority to issue such an order. The decision to issue this order was made in the interest of public health, to ensure that as many Ohioans as possible had access to water as they followed the stay-at-home order to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Now, as the state has lifted the stay-at-home order and has re-opened businesses, restaurants, retail stores and other establishments, Ohio EPA will begin the process of revoking/terminating the March 31 order. The revocation/termination will be effective 30 calendar days from this letter, on July 10, 2020.

As we move forward in this process, it is imperative that we remain in communication and work in partnership with you and your utility directors, not only on short-term steps, but to further the important discussions on fulfilling our collective mission of helping Ohioans get and maintain access to clean water. As you know, even well before COVID-19, there have been many areas in Ohio where people have struggled to get access to water, or who live with poor water quality and quantity on private well systems. Under Governor DeWine's H2Ohio plan, one of Ohio EPA's funding priorities has been supporting the development of more drinking water and wastewater infrastructure, particularly in our small, economically disadvantaged communities. This is a mission that is very important to us, and we know to you as well.

During the week of June 22, we would like to invite you to participate in a virtual meeting with Ohio EPA to discuss what the immediate next steps will be for your community, including how you plan to work with customers who may still be financially struggling to pay their water bills. We recognize our role as a state regulatory agency can only go so far. However, we stand ready to assist you in any way that we can to help ensure the continued delivery of safe, clean drinking water to Ohioans. In the coming days, please look for a follow-up message from my staff to gather your availability so that we can continue this discussion together. We look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Laurie A. Stevenson
Director, Ohio EPA