



**PRESS RELEASE**  
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**Contact:** Angelia Rorison  
(202) 499-0263  
[arorison@usccr.gov](mailto:arorison@usccr.gov)

## **Massachusetts State Advisory Committee Releases Report on Water Affordability in the Commonwealth, Urging State to Declare Water a Basic Human Right**

The Massachusetts State Advisory Committee to the United States Commission on Civil Rights (SAC) has released its report, "[Turning Off the Tap: Massachusetts' Looming Water Affordability Crisis](#)." The Massachusetts SAC urges the state to declare that access to clean, affordable water is a basic human right.

In its report, the Massachusetts SAC warns that lack of access to affordable water has created life threatening inequalities. The Massachusetts SAC learned that water and sewage costs were rising prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Post-pandemic, the rates are predicted to rise even more, shut-offs may increase while infrastructure maintenance declines. Lower income communities and communities of color will be hardest hit.

David Harris, chair of the Massachusetts SAC, states: "Our committee focused on unequal access to affordable water across the Commonwealth, affecting communities of color, immigrant communities, renters, the elderly, and lower income people. Water is essential to life, making access to water a basic human right and the lack of it a health and safety emergency, as the pandemic has made especially clear. Neither the nation nor the Commonwealth protect the affordability of water in its laws or regulations. Water should not be considered an amenity and the committee encourages the state to ensure all residents have access to safe sources of water."

For more information, contact: David Harris, Chair, Massachusetts Advisory Committee ([dharris@law.harvard.edu](mailto:dharris@law.harvard.edu)); or members of the Project Team: Martha Davis, ([m.davis@northeastern.edu](mailto:m.davis@northeastern.edu)); Neenah Estrella-Luna ([neenah@starluna.net](mailto:neenah@starluna.net)); Wendy Kaminer ([wendy@wendykaminer.com](mailto:wendy@wendykaminer.com)). The report is posted on the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights: <https://www.usccr.gov/files/2021-01-27-MA-SAC-Water-Affordability-Report.pdf>.

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency charged with advising the President and Congress on civil rights matters and issuing an annual federal civil rights enforcement report. The Commission, by Congressional mandate, establishes Advisory Committees in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Committee members conduct reviews and produce reports and recommendations concerning local civil rights issues, including justice, voting, discrimination, housing, education, and other important themes. For information about the Commission and our Advisory Committees, please visit <http://www.usccr.gov> and follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).