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To: Assembly Committee on Energy and Utilities
From: Toni Herkert, Government Affairs Director, League of Wisconsin Municipalities
Date: May 25, 2021
RE: AB 300, relating to timing of PSC approvals and AB 302, relating to meter installment

Chairman Kuglitsch and members of the Energy and Utilities Committee,

My name is Toni Herkert, and I am the new Government Affairs Director for the League of Wisconsin Municipalities. Thank you for hearing these two bills important to water utilities today. I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you in support of AB 300 and AB 302. The League worked on these bills as a member of a water utility coalition with MEG Drinking Water Division and Wisconsin Rural Water Association. The League would also like to thank the authors Senator Cowles, Representative Thiesfeldt, and Representative VanderMeer for their hard work and commitment to finding a compromise on these important bills.

As you are probably aware, Wisconsin has 11,525 public water systems, the largest number of any state. Public water systems are defined as those that provide water for human consumption to at least 15 service connections or regularly serve at least 25 people for 60 days or longer per year. Municipal systems are included in a category called community water systems which serve water to people where they live or work. Wisconsin's community water systems serve 70 percent of the state's population. The other 30 percent of the state's residents get their water from private wells.

Municipal community water systems are owned by cities, villages, towns, or sanitary districts and include care and correctional facilities that are owned by counties or municipalities. Wisconsin has 611 municipal systems. Milwaukee Waterworks is the state's largest, serving almost 600,000 people. Wisconsin's smallest municipal water systems, by contrast, serve fewer than 50 people each. While municipal systems only account for 611 of the over 11,000 public water systems, they service over 4 million of the state's residents.

The primary objective for municipal water systems is to provide safe, timely, and reliable distribution of water and other related services to the public for domestic, commercial, or industrial purposes. Water utilities keep a keen eye on efficiencies and technical and financial feasibility to provide the most reliable and efficient service to rate payers in the most economical manner. AB 300 and AB 302 aid in this overall mission by removing some of the red tape and administrative inefficiency from the process of construction authorizations and meter installation or replacement. By providing clear timelines for projects and eliminating delays in the approval process, utilities can better plan, utilize and align financing, and provide related benefits to their customers. With the recent American Rescue Plan Act sending federal funding to municipalities, we have been told that water and sewer projects are on many municipal short lists. Providing the efficiencies, timelines, clarity, and consistency will help move these projects through completion before the federal funding deadlines.

Thank you for your time and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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