



Dear Deputy/Senator,

I am writing to lend support to those in Ireland who are working to prevent the implementation of metered domestic water charges. We have seen in the United States that establishing a metering system for water is unfair to the most vulnerable in society and that it is the first step towards privatization. Metering and water pricing, the policies that many economists have advocated for encouraging conservation, is a wrong minded strategy. Society's interest in ensuring environmentally sustainable water use and universal access to affordable water service is poorly served by a market model. Water is essential to life; commodifying access to water treads on the basic human right to water.

This market-oriented pricing reform is fundamentally flawed. It assumes that households can or will reduce water use when faced with metering and higher prices. However, residential water use is a small fraction of water withdrawals and even draconian water price increases will have little impact on household water consumption. For most households, water goes towards essential uses like drinking, cooking and sanitation; consumer demand for water does not really change, regardless of price. Economists call this price inelasticity. Consumers will not drink twice as much water if the price of water falls by half, nor will they reduce the amount of water they drink by half if the price of water doubles. A Food & Water Watch review of the economic literature found only a very modest consumer response to rising water prices. Households generally reduce water use slightly in the face of even steep price increases.

Addressing conservation should be part of an integrated water strategy. Any water policy must be tailored to local conditions and address both residential and industrial use. Focusing solely on metering and water pricing as the mechanisms for managing demand is unfair to ratepayers and doomed to be ineffective.

Water conservation can be best achieved through restoring aging and leaking infrastructure. Repairing and updating water infrastructure should be paid for out of public funds that are collected from a progressive tax system, not from metering and pricing water.

Sincerely,
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