**City of Providence**

STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

**RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

***No.***

**Introduced by Sponsors:**

Councilor Rachel Miller**,** Councilor Kat Kerwin

**Resolution in Opposition to the Sale, Lease, Monetization, Privatization, and/ or Commodification of the City of Providence Water/ Scituate**

**Whereas,** Water is Life; and

**Whereas**, the United Nations General Assembly recognizes that “[T]he human right to water entitles everyone to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible and affordable water for personal and domestic uses;" and

**Whereas**, Providence water is sourced from the Scituate Reservoir which supplies drinking water to two-thirds of the ratepayers in the state of Rhode Island; and

**Whereas,** The Mayor of the City of Providence and his Administration have proposed the monetization and/or privatization of Providence water by the sale or long-term lease of the sewer and water supply system; and

**Whereas,** The City of Providence has issued a Request for Qualification for monetization and/ or privatization of Providence Water; and

**Whereas**, Rhode Island House Bill H5390authorizes “municipal water supply systems or regional water quality management district commissions” to “enter into transactions with ... public or private operators of water supply systems or water quality management systems,” with no specification or restriction to prevent or limit a future lease or sale to a private corporation; and

**Whereas**, Rhode Island House Bill H5390 also prevents the Rhode Island Public Utilities Commission and the Rhode Island Division of Public Utilities and Carriers from having “any jurisdiction, authority, or other power to approve, reject, review, or in any way affect any transaction” relating to the entity thus formed, removing an important process of oversight for and public involvement in the activities of that entity; and

**Whereas,** Rhode Island House Bill H5390 paves the way for the City of Providence to monetize Providence’s water system; and

**Whereas**, some municipalities that have entered into these types of transactions have later paid millions of dollars and waged lengthy legal battles to regain control over their local water supply; and

**Whereas,** according to watchdog Food & Water Watch, for a typical household, privately owned or operated water utility service costs on average 59% more than public water service; and

**Whereas,** according to public data, even in municipalities where rate freezes were promised, water bills increased by as much as 28% in just four years; and

**Whereas**, the proposed initiative adversely affects the entire Scituate Reservoir Watershed which spans the towns of Scituate, Foster, Gloucester, Western Cranston, and Western Johnston; and

**Whereas**, the proposed initiative adversely impacts the five tributaries that flow into the

Scituate Reservoir: the Barden, the Moswansicut, the Ponaganset, the Regulating Reservoir, and the Westconnaug rivers; and

**Whereas**, the proposed initiative adversely impacts the ecosystems and habitats within the 92.8 square miles of the Scituate Reservoir Watershed, which is home to woods, vegetation and over 1,000 species including plants and animals; and

**Whereas**, Providence’s most heavily impacted black, brown and indigenous communities, as well as environmental leaders have numerous concerns about water monetization/privatization given that our residents depend on water for survival and given the negative impacts of similar proposals to commodify water in communities across the country, including rate hikes, increased water shut-offs, reduced water quality and increased levels of pollutants in drinking water, failure to initiate necessary infrastructure upgrades, foreclosure of homes based on water liens, forced removal of children from homes due to lack of running and/or clean drinking water, labor abuses and the erosion of worker’s rights, serious health and safety violations, vulnerable ecosystem disruption, reduced public transparency, monitoring, control and accountability, and serious racial and environmental justice inequities impacting communities who already bear the burden of economic, social, and racial inequality; and

**Whereas,** the cities of Baltimore, MD, and St. Louis, MO and the states of Massachusetts and Wisconsin have stopped proposals for water monetization for the concerns similar to concerns cited above.

**Now, Therefore, Be it Resolved,** that Providence City Council upholds that water is life and that it is an inalienable human right. It is not to be treated as a commodity to be exploited for profit at the expense of the most vulnerable; and

**Be it Further Resolved**, that Providence City Council hereby stands in opposition to any and all forms of monetization and/or privatization of Providence water supply and sewer and of Scituate Reservoir; and

**Be It Further Resolved,** that Providence City Council stands in opposition to the introduced legislation: House Bill H5390; and

**Be it Further Resolved,** that there be an immediate moratorium on any and all actions by the City leading to monetization of Providence Water, including RFQ, RFP processes; and

**Be it Further Resolved,** That, upon passage, copies of the resolution be sent to the Office of the Mayor of the City of Providence, the members of the Providence Delegation in the Rhode Island General Assembly, the leadership of the Rhode Island House and the Rhode Island Senate, and the Office of the Governor.