



MAYOR BYRON W. BROWN

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**MAYOR BYRON W. BROWN ANNOUNCES THREE NEW INITIATIVES AIMED
AT ADJUSTING FEES AND FINES LOW INCOME RESIDENTS FACE FOR
LATEST PHASE OF THE BUFFALO REFORM AGENDA**

These Programs will help ease the economic burdens Black and low-income residents in the City of Buffalo are facing from the combination of systemic economic injustices and the current economic downturn the COVID-19 pandemic has caused.

Buffalo, NY—Today, Mayor Byron W. Brown announced two new amnesty programs and a new way to assist low-income motorists facing traffic violation fees for City of Buffalo residents. The first amnesty program will waive any late fees for parking tickets that are more than a year old while the second amnesty program waives any late fees or interest on delinquent Water bill payments. The Buffalo Motorist Assistance Program will allow low-income residents to pay lower fines for equipment and low-level moving violations. All three programs will begin on July 1, 2020 and the amnesty programs will continue until the end of the year.

Mayor Brown said, "When fines, late fees, or interest payments on tickets or bills rise to the point where they can no longer be paid then the penalty no longer fits the situation. By adopting a progressive scale on fines and waiving these other types of payments we are giving people a chance to pay what is owed, clear their records, remove any potential impact to the status of their vehicle registration and maintain a constant supply of safe water as we enter into the summer and continue to battle the COVID-19 pandemic. This latest announcement as part of the Buffalo Reform Agenda addresses some of the economic inequities that we must also confront as part of our efforts to make Buffalo a more racially just and equitable City."

The Parking Amnesty program will waive the late fees of any ticket issued prior to June 30, 2019. The City will send letters to every person who has been issued a ticket that is eligible for the amnesty waiver and how they can pay the ticket while observing the physical and social distancing required to protect public health. According to City records, 56,664 tickets will be eligible for this program.

The Water Bill Amnesty program will waive any late fees or interest for individuals who have had their service turned off due to delinquent payments. Over the course of the last three months, over 200 residents have had their water services restored and no one has had their water service shut-off as part of the Mayor's efforts to protect public health during the COVID-19 pandemic response. All of those residents, along with any others, will be eligible for the amnesty program. The Water Bill Amnesty program will:

- Forgive interest and penalties associated with an account balance, forgive the meter fee, and forgive any charge related to a burst meter if applicable;
- Require a down payment of only 10% of the remaining principal balance;
- Require the homeowner to sign up for a 12-month plan to repay the past due amount;
- Allow the installation of advanced reading technology meter; and
- Enroll in automatic monthly billing so residents can continue to make timely payments and remain current on their bill;

In addition to the Water Bill Amnesty program, the Buffalo Water Authority is encouraging everyone to enroll in its Pathways to Affordable Water, which can help residents access different levels of assistance to help lower their water bills. Qualifying residents who participate in the Water Bill Amnesty program will be allowed to enroll in this program and residents can find more information and enroll by visiting: getwaterwisebuffalo.org.

The Buffalo Motorist Assistance Program (BMAP) will give residents pleading guilty to low-level moving or equipment violations an opportunity to demonstrate their income status and arrange a fine that may be lower than the former flat fines which were previously applied. This will ensure that the fine is both payable but also severe enough to dissuade future bad driving behaviors. Flat violation fees are often too high to be paid by lower income individuals such that they remain unpaid and have limited deterrent effect. This new system addresses that issue by linking the violation fines to income levels. This will also help the City collect those payments because residents will be more likely to pay them and therefore avoid other enforcement actions, like license or registration suspensions often associated with non-payment of those fines.

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