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H.B. 1416 — Water Quality Accountability Act Committee on Environment and Transportation March 4th, 2020

Thank you, Chair Barve and members of the E&T Committee. I'm Glen Middleton Executive Director with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Council 67. On behalf of our members in Maryland, I ask you to **issue an UNFAVORABLE report on the Water Quality Accountability Act, HB 1416**. This is a water privatization bill in disguise.

Water corporations are seeking to take over public water systems across our state. We saw that in Baltimore in 2018 when a Wall Street firm and a French multinational Suez targeted our city aggressively. We fought them off and successfully banned water privatization in Baltimore City. Other towns across the state are still vulnerable.

The current president and CEO of American Water, the nation's largest private water corporation, told stockholders that this bill, the Water Quality Accountability Act, was the last of three pieces of state legislation that it passes to push towns to privatize their water systems. We cannot allow this in Maryland.

Water privatization sacrifices public control over essential public services, downsizes good union jobs and hikes water rates on working families and local businesses.

The bill before you today would add a sizable burden on localities without providing any state support to help vulnerable systems comply. We need to improve our water systems, provide safe water for our communities and provide safer working environments for our employees. To do that, the state must step up and provide help.

This legislation does the opposite. It would take away all public funding from systems that fail to produce required reports. That's how water corporations would take over systems: by starving them of resources.

New Jersey was the first state to pass this corporate water law. New Jersey is the country's water privatization hot spot. There, 40 percent of the population has privatized water. In contrast, more than 95 percent of Marylanders who are on a water system have public water. This Water Quality Accountability Act is pushing even more towns in New Jersey to privatize. It is the main reason that Egg Harbor City, NJ, is selling its water and sewer systems to American Water. For this tiny town of 1,200 homes, the Water Quality Accountability Act imposed nearly \$400,000 in extra annual costs, hitting homeowners with a bill of \$160 a year more just to comply with this one law. Marylanders can't afford this either.

Our water systems face many pressing needs. Don't make this bill be the one that breaks our backs.

Please issue an UNFAVORABLE report on HB 1416. Thank you.