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HB 220 – Environment: Water - Individual Unit Meters

Hearing before the House Economic Matters Committee on February 4, 2026

Position: FAVORABLE

The Public Justice Center (PJC) is a nonprofit public interest law firm that stands with tenants to protect and expand their rights to safe, habitable, affordable, and non-discriminatory housing and their rights to fair and equal treatment by Maryland's landlord-tenant laws, courts, and agencies. The PJC advocates for systemic change to build a just society.

PJC supports **HB 220** and asks for a favorable report because for too many renters in Maryland, they are being strapped with water bills, for the usage of water that is not their own. **HB 220** would finally require that, for individualized meter systems, a landlord could not require a renter to reimburse them for water they never used. For too many Maryland families, water bills are increasing at high rates¹, placing additional strain on renters who already face rising housing, food, and health care costs. Allowing landlords and property managers to bundle utility charges or shift unmetered costs to tenants obscures actual water usage, reduces incentives to conserve water, and disproportionately impacts low-income residents.

The Public Justice Center has too often represented renters who deal with the issue of being overcharged for their water bill usages. Oftentimes, these high-water bills did not just include the renter's personal water use, but included the water usage of common areas, laundry rooms, and even other neighbors. **HB 220** would end this practice and ensure renters are paying for their own personal water usage.

HB 220 ensures that renters are charged for what they actually use, not subsidizing the excess costs associated with inefficient systems or broader industrial demands on water infrastructure. With the backdrop of rising utility demand and infrastructure strain, now is the right time for Maryland to set standards that protect renters and ensure transparency.

Public Justice Center **urges a favorable report on HB 220**. If you have any questions, please contact Albert Turner, turnera@publicjustice.org (410) 625-9409 Ext. 250.

¹ <https://www.thebanner.com/politics-power/local-government/wssc-water-sewer-montgomery-county-council-costs-bills-prices-4XPDGBMEKJA2NAGHRU7TL4UMJQ/>

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