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February 4, 2026

Legislative Position: Favorable
House Bill 34
Municipalities - Open Drainage Inlets - Required Grating Systems
House Environment & Transportation Committee

Dear Chair Korman and members of the committee:

Established in 1950, the Associated Utility Contractors of Maryland, Inc. (AUC) is dedicated to advancing the utility contracting industry across the state. Our mission is to foster strong relationships between utility contractors and their clients, uphold the highest professional standards within the industry, and elevate the reputation of utility professionals within the business community. We actively advocate for public policies that address industry challenges and contribute to improving Maryland's overall business environment.

As a statewide trade association representing contractors that specialize in underground utility construction, including water, stormwater, and sewer infrastructure, we write in **strong support of House Bill 34.**

Safety is a foundational priority for AUC and our member companies. Utility contractors routinely work in and around open excavations, drainage structures, and active roadways where unprotected stormwater inlets can pose serious hazards to workers and the public. Open drainage inlets increase the risk of falls, struck-by incidents, and equipment hazards.

House Bill 34 takes a **proactive, safety-first approach** by requiring municipalities to install and secure grating systems on both new and existing open drainage inlets. This common-sense measure will significantly reduce preventable injuries by ensuring dangerous openings are properly covered while still allowing stormwater to flow as intended.

In addition to improving worker and public safety, requiring grating systems helps protect the integrity of Maryland's stormwater infrastructure. Covered inlets reduce the likelihood of debris intrusion, blockages, and emergency maintenance situations, conditions that often place utility workers in higher-risk environments. Establishing a

Whitney Beall
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PO Box 249
Annapolis Junction, MD 20701

P. 410-750-2554
whitney@aucofmd.com



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clear statewide standard also provides consistency for municipalities and contractors, improving project planning and hazard mitigation across jurisdictions.

For these reasons, **AUC strongly supports House Bill 34 and urges the Committee to issue a favorable report.** This legislation represents an important step toward protecting Maryland's workforce, residents, and public infrastructure.

Thank you for your consideration and continued commitment to public safety.

Sincerely,

The Associated Utility Contractors of Maryland (AUC)