

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 491 (Delegate T. Morgan, *et al.*)
Environment and Transportation

St. Mary's County - Metropolitan Commission - Discontinuance of Service

This bill authorizes the St. Mary's County Metropolitan Commission (MetCom) to discontinue all or any part of water or sewer service provided to a private property determined to be unsafe, unfit, or unsuitable for human occupancy due to an accident, artificial disaster, or natural disaster. MetCom must suspend the ready-to-serve charge for these properties at the time of discontinuance until the service is restored. The bill authorizes MetCom to assess applicable parties for the full actual costs incurred by MetCom resulting from violations of MetCom rules and regulations by repealing the previous cap of \$1,000 for these assessments.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: State operations and finances are not materially affected.

Local Effect: While the bill does not materially affect MetCom expenditures, it does give MetCom the authority to assess and be reimbursed its actual costs for certain expenditures. MetCom revenues may increase to the extent that assessments for actual costs to MetCom are levied against parties who violate certain rules and regulations.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Current Law: MetCom, a component unit of St. Mary's County, was established by the General Assembly in 1957 as a quasi-governmental, nonprofit body, to supply water and sewer service to St. Mary's County. MetCom has been providing water and sewer service since 1964.

MetCom is authorized to discontinue water and sewer service for nonpayment of any service, connection, inspection, benefit or any other charge if not paid within 30 days of the due date. In addition to payment of the bill, MetCom must collect a turn-off and turn-on charge before resuming service.

MetCom may use administrative or judicial enforcement remedies for violations of any rules or regulations adopted by MetCom concerning public sewer use, including public sewer drains, the installation of building sewer connections, and the discharge of waters and wastes into the public sewer systems.

Among other actions, MetCom may issue a reimbursement assessment for actual costs (including time and materials) *up to \$1,000* as an administrative enforcement remedy under certain circumstances.

Local Fiscal Effect: St. Mary's County advises in fiscal 2025 there have been 11 incidents of violations affecting water and sewer assets resulting in \$105,000 in uncollected costs. The bill removes the cap of \$1,000 on assessments for such violations and authorizes MetCom to assess its actual costs. Therefore, under the bill, to the extent such violations continue, MetCom will be authorized to seek full reimbursement of actual costs and not have to absorb any actual costs it incurs above \$1,000, as specified.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): St. Mary's County; Public Service Commission; Department of Legislative Services

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