



S.B. 820 — Water Quality Accountability Act
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
 March 5, 2020

Position: UNFAVORABLE

We, the below organizations, urge you to oppose the Water Quality Accountability Act. This bill would strip away state and federal assistance from vulnerable water systems and add unfunded mandates on our state’s water providers without providing any technical or financial assistance to help systems comply.

The Water Quality Accountability Act is a water privatization industry backed bill.

Walter Lynch, the current president and CEO of American Water – the nation’s largest private water corporation, which owns water systems in Western Maryland— told investors in December that this legislation is the last of three laws that the corporation works to pass in states to advance water privatization:

“We work with state legislators and regulators to come up with rule making and legislation that enables these acquisitions to happen. And we’ve been doing this for a decade, and we’ve been very successful at it. This public policy, the really 3 areas have helped us grow: fair market value legislation, consolidated tariffs and then emerging legislation around the Water Quality Accountability Act.”

The Water Quality Accountability Act has caused New Jersey communities to privatize.

Passage of this law is the key reason that Egg Harbor City, N.J., is selling its water and sewer systems to American Water. For this tiny town of 1,200 homes, the law imposed nearly \$400,000 in extra annual costs, hitting homeowners with a bill of \$160 a year to pay for it.

The Water Quality Accountability Act would increase household water bills.

Communities across the state face a deepening water affordability crisis, as water bills are some of the most regressive fees that families pay. Privatization and unfunded state mandates exacerbate this crisis. Communities simply cannot afford water privatization: private companies charge 59 percent more than local governments do.

Maryland must provide support for local public water systems.

The state should first provide tools and resources to help communities develop asset management plans and cyber security plans before requiring these plans and penalizing systems for failing to comply. The state should work collaboratively with local, public water providers to identify the needs of the systems and how the state can best help ensure safe water for all.

Please oppose this pro-privatization Water Quality Accountability Act.

Sincerely,

AFSCME Maryland Council 3
AFSCME Council 67
AFT Maryland
Common Cause Maryland
Food & Water Action
Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Baltimore
Jews United for Justice
Maryland Conservation Council
Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition
Maryland Legislative Coalition
Maryland State Conference of the NAACP
Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service
Sierra Club, Maryland Chapter
United Workers
WISE