



**Testimony to the Senate Committee on Education, Health, and Environment
SB 820 – Public Water Systems – Supplier Requirements
Water Quality Accountability Act of 2020
Position: Favorable**

March 4, 2020

The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky
Committee on Education, Health, and Environment
Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401
cc: Members, Committee on Education, Health, and Environment

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Committee Members,

I write in support of SB 820 as the President of Maryland American Water, which provides public water service to the residents of the Town of Bel Air and portions of Harford County, Maryland.

We strongly support SB 820 because it will improve the safety, reliability and oversight of water infrastructure and help assure homes and businesses across Maryland have access to safe, clean, reliable water service at a reasonable cost. This bill provides added transparency on the performance of Maryland public water systems and would help drive accountability to solve issues before they rise to the level of the problems which have occurred in Flint, Michigan or Newark, New Jersey. It is difficult to fix what you cannot see – this bill helps provide visibility on what needs fixed.

Access to safe drinking water for all customers is critical to public health and safety of the community. The requirements of this bill are considered best practices and critical components of operating and maintaining a public water system which provides safe, high-quality and reliable service for its customers. With this bill, elected officials will have the information needed to make important decisions to help leverage resources and focus attention, action and investments before a crisis occurs.

Water suppliers must think strategically about their infrastructure in order to create and implement asset management plans and timelines designed to inspect, maintain, repair and renew the water infrastructure. These plans will help prevent the inattention and lack of investment which has allowed many of our infrastructure problems across the country to develop. If problems arise and lead to multiple environmental violations, this bill requires development of a mitigation plan, in conjunction with environmental regulators, to fix the issue.



AMERICAN WATER

Our teams of water quality, plant operations, and water distribution professionals work hard every day to ensure the treatment and delivery of water service to our customers in Maryland. Through our commitment to providing safe and reliable service to our customers and our employees' dedication to excellence, Maryland American Water is ready to certify our system's compliance with this bill.

Our health depends on clean water. In too many cases water service is provided through aging underground facilities we cannot see, and we put these problems out of mind. Measures like SB 820 help ensure that utilities are proactive in addressing aging infrastructure and that infrastructure problems that have developed over decades receive the needed attention or action. If we act now, it will help provide current residents and future generations in Maryland safe and reliable water service.

We strongly support SB 820 and urge the committee to give it a FAVORABLE report.

Sincerely,

Barry L. Suits, P.E.

President, Maryland American Water

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