



Rockville Mayor and Council
HB 1416 – Public Water Systems – Supplier Requirements
(Water Quality Accountability Act of 2020)
OPPOSE

Good afternoon Delegate Barve and members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee. I'm Susan Straus, Acting Deputy Director of Rockville's Department of Public Works and I am honored to be here in representation of the Rockville Mayor and Council, who strongly oppose HB 1416 Public Water Systems – Supplier requirements (Water Accountability Act of 2020).

While this bill is well intended, it is duplicative of the Environmental Protection Agency's Section 2013 of America's Water Infrastructure Act (AWIA) of 2018, and subjects water suppliers to unnecessary administrative burdens. The requirement to develop a Cybersecurity Program is redundant with the federally mandated AWIA requirements and is therefore not necessary. Further, the requirement to submit a report to the Maryland Department (MDE) of the Environment on the Cybersecurity Program creates a burden for the State to ensure confidentiality of the water suppliers' Program. Moreover, this report requirement creates a potential risk for sensitive and critical information to be unintentionally disclosed, which could result in a cyber-attack.

The bill's provisions are onerous and burdensome to water suppliers. HB 1416 prescriptively establishes an "Asset Management Plan" that requires certain maintenance levels for two assets within a water supplier's system: "critical valves" and fire hydrants. The maintenance level of service (LOS) for all the water supplier's assets is best established by the service provider, who is the expert in the field, and is intimately familiar with the needs and demands of their total water supply system. HB 1416 attempts to influence the LOS by establishing what is considered to be critical infrastructure components; the inspection frequency; inspection standards of the "critical valves;" and fire hydrants. The bill is also problematic because it does not follow industry standards.

As the operational expert, the water supplier is best suited to determine the frequency of equipment inspections and how to execute it. Rockville's asset management program includes water main rehabilitation; valve and hydrant inspection and maintenance; storage tank inspection and maintenance; and the operation and maintenance of the water treatment plant. Each water system has unique challenges and system constraints. The water supplier should develop asset management plans that fit their own needs, instead of being forced to comply with a prescriptive, one-size-fits-all standard established by the State.

In closing, HB 1416 is an overreach by the State, adds unnecessary cost and process, and could endanger the public health and safety by making water suppliers vulnerable to cyber-attacks. We urge the Committee to provide HB 1416 with an unfavorable report as soon as possible.