



February 3, 2021

House Economic Matters Committee
Room 203
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: House Bill 581, Maryland Essential Workers Protection Act

Chairman Davis and Members of the Committee,

While we appreciate the intent behind the bill, Maryland American Water must **oppose House Bill 581** for the following reasons.

- 1) The bill, as written, would put in place additional burdens on Maryland businesses that have already faced challenges and/or are currently struggling as a result of COVID-19.
- 2) Since the beginning of the public health emergency, Maryland American Water established the following measures in an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and protect our essential employees and our customers:
 - Employees who can perform their jobs remotely continue to work from home
 - Suspension of all non-emergency, in-home appointments
 - Limited amount of contact with customers during field appointments
 - Pre-work customer questionnaire for emergency in-home appointments
 - Field employees being provided with appropriate personal protective equipment
 - Staggered shift start times and one employee per company vehicle where possible
 - Limited access to treatment plant control rooms/created back up treatment plant control rooms
 - Continually reminding customers through job site and vehicle signage and social media to follow the CDC's social distancing recommendations and not approach our employees working in the field.
- 3) While Maryland American Water employees are essential workers, many are working from home during the pandemic. Those that have continued to work in the field and at facilities to continue to provide essential services have limited interaction with the public. Any work they must do as part of a team, is conducted in a controlled environment, strictly adhering to the measures listed above and with the appropriate PPE.



AMERICAN WATER

To date, not one Maryland American Water employee has contracted COVID-19 during their work hours.

- 4) In addition to being regulated by the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the Maryland Department of the Environment, Maryland American Water, like all private utilities in the state, is subject to an additional layer of regulatory oversight by the Maryland Public Service Commission. The Commission regulates the infrastructure, rates, management, and billing for the 22 water systems that fall under its jurisdiction.

For the reasons stated above, we respectfully request an unfavorable report on House Bill 581.

Sincerely,

Barry L. Suits, *President*, Maryland American Water

