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Economic Matters Committee

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Public Utilities

Workers' Compensation



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB789

WASHINGTON SUBURBAN SANITARY COMMISSION – VIDEO AND AUDIO
STREAMING AND ARCHIVING MEETINGS AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

MARCH 2nd, 2021

Chair Barve, Vice-Chair Stein, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

Thank you for taking time to consider HB789. The goal of this bill is to ensure continued transparency of the WSSC decision making process and to allow for flexibility in late payment charges so that the Commission can be responsive to community challenges.

Transparency: Good governance requires transparency and accessibility to allow residents to understand and engage in decision making processes. Even before the pandemic, the Commission and many other agencies had moved in the direction of streaming meetings live and archiving these videos on their website. Last year, the General Assembly passed legislation to require the following agencies to stream their meetings live and archive the video on their website: the Stadium Authority, the State Board of Elections, the Emergency Numbers System Board, the Public Service Commission, and the Maryland Transportation Authority. The State Board of Education and the Interagency Committee on School Construction are also required in statute to stream their meetings. By codifying in statute the requirement for live streaming, we ensure that regardless of changes in leadership and priorities in the future, our community will have access to and transparency around the Commission's decision making processes.

Flexibility to Meet Consumer Needs: Throughout the course of the pandemic, many of us have looked closely at affordability issues, including late fees. This bill will expand the Customer Assistance Program to provide financial assistance that may include the reduction or waiver of fees, including late fees.

Thank you for considering these simple, yet important, changes. I urge a favorable report on HB789.