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February 22, 2022

The Honorable C.T. Wilson and
Members of the House Economic Matters Committee
6 Bladen Street, Room 231
House Office Building
Annapolis MD 21401

Re: **SUPPORT – HB 526 – Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission – Plumbing and Fuel Gas Services – Licenses and Penalties (PG/MC 109-22)**

Dear Chairman Charles and Members of the Committee:

The Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC Water) **SUPPORTS** HB 526 – Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission – Plumbing and Fuel Gas Services – Licenses and Penalties PG/MC 109-22.

WSSC Water is the largest water and wastewater utility in Maryland, with nearly 5,844 miles of freshwater pipeline and over 5,610 miles of sewer pipeline. Our service area spans nearly 1,000 square miles in Montgomery and Prince George’s Counties, and we serve 1.9 million residents through approximately 475,000 customer accounts.

The proposed legislation will authorize WSSC Water, in addition to other penalties, to impose a penalty not exceeding \$5,000 for each violation to persons who violate provisions of the Maryland Annotated Code, Public Utilities Article, §29-101.

Public Utilities Article (PUA), §§17-403 and 17-404 authorizes WSSC Water to adopt regulations for the construction, operation, maintenance, renovation, and repair of the Commission’s water system and sanitary sewer system, and for the installation of fuel gas piping, appliances, appurtenances, and connections from the point of services supplying any premises in the Sanitary District. Pursuant to §24-106 of the Public Utilities Article, WSSC Water issues plumbing licenses and gasfitter licenses to regulate plumbing and fuel gas work performed in Montgomery and Prince George’s counties.

In accordance with its regulatory authority, WSSC Water adopted a Plumbing and Fuel Gas Code (Code) establishing requirements and standards for plumbing and fuel gas work performed in the

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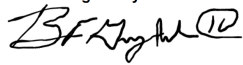
Sanitary District. Under the Code, WSSC Water is authorized to deny, suspend, or revoke a plumbing or gasfitter license for violations of its regulations governing plumbing and gas fitting. Pursuant to PUA §29-101, WSSC is authorized to impose fines and penalties against persons utilizing a progressive fine structure with a minimum penalty of \$250.00 for the first violation and a maximum penalty of \$1,000.00 for the fourth or subsequent violations of the Code.

As WSSC Water is a bicounty state agency, HB 526 will give WSSC parity with the Maryland State Board of Plumbing as the current fine structure is not an adequate penalty to deter violations of the WSSC Plumbing and Fuel Gas Code. The State Board of Plumbing is the regulatory body charged with similar authority as WSSC Water to issue licenses for plumbing and fuel gas work performed in the State, except in Baltimore County or in areas under the jurisdiction of WSSC Water. The State is authorized to impose fines and penalties against individuals for violations of its regulations, including suspension or revocation of a license and a penalty not exceeding \$5,000.00 for each violation, pursuant to §12-312 of the Business Occupations and Professions Article.

We request a **FAVORABLE** report for HB 526 to allow WSSC Water to impose fines similar to the Maryland State Board of Plumbing for violations of its regulations. This authority will encourage stricter compliance of its Code and promote public safety by protecting against hazards to life, health, property, or to WSSC Water's systems as a result of an individual's failure to adhere to WSSC's regulations governing plumbing and fuel gas work.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 240-917-5356 or guy.andes@wsscwater.com.

Sincerely,

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Benjamin F. Guy Andes IV
Government Affairs Manager