

SB0513, introduced by Senator Lam, is an important step in transparency, accountability, and more equitable infrastructure services for Maryland's communities. The bill will provide open data on key aspects of water/wastewater utility operations, including water shutoffs, water shutoff notices, and water arrearages. Making this data available monthly or annually (depending on utility size) will help to identify gaps in infrastructure coverage, services, and affordability. This is particularly important in repairing past harms in low-income and communities of color (where water shutoffs are most prevalent) and ensuring better practices for more equitable outcomes moving forward. In fact, race is a strong predictor of whether communities in the United States have adequate and reliable access to affordable, clean water and wastewater services. Transparent data is key for building equitable solutions with the 100+ frontline organizations and allies we work with on water issues across the country, and for so many more communities in the United States. We hope the passage of this bill can serve as a national example for water data collection bills across the nation and help move from water assistance to true water affordability.

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