



February 23, 2023

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Miller Senate Building, 2 West
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Senate Bill 513 – Environment – Collection and Reporting of Drinking Water and Wastewater Data and Information – Requirements

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE or Department) has reviewed Senate Bill 513 and would like to share some information. MDE has met with bill sponsor regarding our concerns and working to provide amendments.

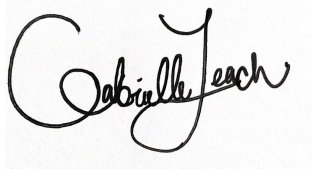
Senate Bill 513 require the Department to collect and publish certain information online from water and wastewater utilities through a new protocol, require those entities to provide updated information on a specified basis, prescribe civil penalties for non-compliance, mandate an ongoing process of public comment, and establish annual reporting obligations for the Department to respond to comments and analyze the extensive data collected under the Bill, and provide a report to the Governor and the General Assembly every October beginning in 2024. Senate Bill 513 would establish a vast, new reporting obligation for water and wastewater utilities State-wide and mandate a voluminous database for the Department to establish, operate, maintain, and analyze on an ongoing basis, representing a large commitment of resources from the Department.

Most of the information required by SB 513 is not currently being reported to the Department. In order to fulfill these requirements, the Department will require a significant amount of additional staffing for outreach to water utilities (there are currently 3,236 water utilities in Maryland), development of database parameters, development of self-reporting forms, IT support, reviewing submissions, and determining compliance. While the large utilities (Maryland has 33 large water utilities) will have some or most of this information available. The remaining 3,205 small water utilities will likely be compiling most of the information for the first time.

The definition of water utility combines public or private entities that provide wastewater services to customers within a service area. The difference between a small utility and large utility is based on the number of customers. The Department currently does not issue wastewater permits based on that criteria. Staff will need to reach out to all wastewater permittees to determine applicability and amend permits to include the requirements of this bill. Additional professional staff, administrative staff and IT staff will be required for the wastewater permits division to implement the legislation.

Thank you for considering the Department's information regarding this legislation. We will continue to monitor SB 513 during the Committee's deliberations, and I am available to answer any questions you may have. Please feel free to contact me at 410-453-3235 or by e-mail at Gabrielle.Leach@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gabrielle Leach". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'G' and 'L'.

Gabrielle Leach
Deputy Director
Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs

Cc: The Honorable Clarence Lam