

Testimony of Barry Suits on behalf of Maryland American Water Company

Maryland American Water has been providing water service to residents in the Town of Bel Air, Maryland for more than 90 years. As a subsidiary of American Water, Maryland American Water is part of a team that provides safe reliable water service to more than 14 million American's every day and has been doing so since 1886.

As President of Maryland American Water and a registered professional engineer with more than 30 years of experience in the water and wastewater industry, I strongly believe that Senate Bill 531, the Water Safety and Cybersecurity Act of 2023, is critical for protecting public health throughout Maryland. All residents of Maryland should have access to safe, affordable, and reliable water service and I appreciate Senator Klausmeier introducing this legislation in support of this effort.

What exactly does this bill do and how will it support safe, affordable, and reliable water service across Maryland? I have listed a few key components of the legislation below:

- Requires suppliers of water to develop a cybersecurity program defining and implementing organizational accountabilities and responsibilities for cyber risk management, conduct risk assessments, remain aware of cyber threats to and vulnerabilities of their water system, and create and exercise incident response and recovery plans.
- Creation of an asset management plan to help ensure appropriate replacement cycles and outline prioritized capital expenditures to assure safe, reliable water service.
- Addresses mitigation plans for Notices of Violation aimed at prevention of future occurrence of the violations.
- Outlines certain best practices in the industry for operation and maintenance of valves and fire hydrants.
- Provides transparency to Marylanders to track the performance of their water suppliers.

The above requirements of this legislation are all best practices and benchmarks of well managed water utilities. Adherence to these standards will provide early warning of water systems in need and transparency to customers to solve problems before a possible crisis. For these reasons, I ask for your support of Senate Bill 531.

