



Maryland Municipal League
The Association of Maryland's Cities and Towns

TESTIMONY

March 1, 2023

Committee: House Environment & Transportation

Bill: _____ HB 893 - Environment - Water Utilities - Shutoff Protections (Water Access for All Protection Act)

Position: **Oppose**

Reason for Position:

The Maryland Municipal League opposes House Bill 893, which exempts broad groups of individuals from water service shut off.

Almost 90 municipal governments in the State provide community water service to their constituents, including some of the smallest municipalities. Our cities and towns that provide this critical service understand the importance of reliable water service to their citizens. However, providing clean and safe water is costly and onerous. The fees recouped through water bills are restricted to paying the principal and interest on bonds associated with the infrastructure and maintenance, repair, and operation of the water system.

It is the purview of municipal governments to provide water service to their constituents, and the terms of service should remain a local authority. A survey of our members shows that municipalities in the State are quite generous in terms of the number of delinquency notifications before service shut off, the number of days between an account becoming delinquent and service shut off, and offering flexible payment plans.

Municipal governments that provide water service are concerned that without the tool to shut off service to delinquent customers, or at least the threat of service termination, there will be a rise in non-payment of accounts. In response, municipalities would need to increase water rates to recoup lost revenue in order to maintain the same quality of service.

As such, the League respectfully requests that this committee provide HB 893 with an unfavorable report.

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