



SB572

Environment - Collection and Reporting of Drinking Water and Wastewater Documents, Data, and Information – Requirements

Testimony before Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

February 6, 2024, 1:00 pm

Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, Sponsor Washington, and members of the committee, my name is Elizabeth Fixsen, and I represent the 700+ members of Indivisible Howard County. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We are providing written testimony today in support of SB572, a bill requiring public dissemination of information pertaining to local water quality.

Specifically, the bill requires that a water utility operating in the State to post on its website or provide to the Department of the Environment documents, data, and information required as part of the water utility's annual water quality consumer confidence report; [and requires] local government to provide or post on its website data and information to a certain water utility.

Approximately 5.1 million Maryland residents are served by public drinking water systems while over 1 million completely rely on private wells as their source of water. Recent studies have detected microbiological contaminants such as total coliforms and E. coli in both private and public drinking water supplies in Maryland, as well as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), aka "forever chemicals," in approximately 1.3% of Marylanders' public drinking water.

Recent tests revealed the presence of E. coli in the drinking water in three sites in West Baltimore, a predominantly Black and low-income area. City officials determined the contamination was caused by a cascade of infrastructure failures.

Aging urban infrastructure is a nationwide problem impairing water quality; however, the repair of such deteriorating infrastructure is a long-term project, and in the interim, this bill will help to ensure that that citizens have ready access to information about water quality in their community.

We respectfully urge a favorable report.

Elizabeth Fixsen
Savage, MD

Sources Cited:

University of Maryland. *Grand Challenges: The Maryland Safe Drinking WATER (Water Analysis and Testing for Education and Research) Study*. <https://research.umd.edu/safe-drinking-water>

NBC News. 'I'm scared to give it to my kids': Baltimore's water issues are symptoms of a growing national problem. <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/baltimore-national-water-problems-epa-rcna62762>