



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Marc Elrich
County Executive

February 3, 2026

TO: The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Chair, *Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee*

FROM: Marc Elrich
County Executive

RE: Senate Bill 130, *Environment - Water - Individual Unit Meters*

Support

I am writing to express my support for Senate Bill 130, *Environment - Water - Individual Water Meters*, because it addresses critical issues that were identified in a May 2025 report issued by Montgomery County's Office of Consumer Protection (OCP) after investigating tenant complaints about water billing practices at the Grand Apartments, a 525-unit apartment complex located in the County. The complaints included malfunctioning water meters, retroactive billing based on estimated usage over a six-month period, and services fees that in some cases matched or exceeded monthly water charges. The report concluded that there is a gap in the regulation of billing practices for private individual water meters. These types of meters are not regulated by the Public Services Commission or the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission and there are no protections in current State law regarding excessive service fees, deficient maintenance, replacement practices, or inaccurate changes.

This bill applies to a landlord who owns a building served by a master water meter that measures consumption for the whole building. The bill allows a landlord to install individual water meters for each dwelling unit but includes a variety of provisions to ensure tenants are treated fairly, including provisions that: (1) require a landlord to allocate water usage charges in proportion to actual water usage by each unit; (2) prohibit a landlord from passing on the costs associated with poor maintenance, leaks, or common area usage; (3) prohibit a landlord from charging more than \$1 per unit per month to cover the administrative costs of billing; (4) require that each individual water meter include a leak detection monitor; (5) require landlords to maintain adequate records for individual meters that may be inspected by tenants; (6) prohibit the inclusion of unpaid water bills in the calculation of "unpaid rent" in an eviction proceeding; and (7) outline a process for tenants to file complaints for violation of the bill.

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Importantly, the bill requires the Maryland Department of the Environment, in consultation with the Department of Housing and Community Development, to adopt regulations governing accuracy, testing, and recordkeeping for individual private water meters.

The absence of regulatory oversight of individual private water meters poses significant risk to tenants throughout the State. I respectfully request that the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee help remedy this situation by voting favorable on this bill.

cc: Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee