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Anne Arundel County

Judicial Proceedings Committee

Joint Committee on Children,
Youth, and Families



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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SPONSOR TESTIMONY

**Senate Bill 130
Water - Individual Unit Meters**

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and Committee members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

For the record, I am Shaneka Henson, representing District 30 in Anne Arundel County and member of the JPR Committee

It is my privilege to present Senate Bill 130 - Water - Individual Unit Meters

While this bill authorizes owners, operators, or managers (or contractors hired by owners, operators, or managers) to install individual unit water meters for apartments and other dwelling units such as condominiums where multiple users exist, receiving water service in bulk from one source --

It also prohibits the owners or management of these housing units, who have installed the individual meters, from imposing any additional water or sewerage costs on the unit other than the actual charges imposed by the water service provider.

In addition, the bill (1) requires that the owner (or agent) maintain records of the owner's actual use and (2) prohibits any unpaid water bills from being considered as unpaid rent, should an eviction proceeding occur.

You may be familiar with this issue as this bill was brought to Delegate Charkoudian's attention by owners of a 525-unit apartment complex in Montgomery County. Angered at that complaints were being ignored, the tenants had the County's Office of Consumer Protection investigate their reports of malfunctioning water meters, receiving excessive and retroactive bills over their actual usage for over a six-month period, as well as receiving service fees that in some cases matched or exceeded their monthly water charges.

A copy of the report produced by the Montgomery County Department of Consumer Protection is provided with this testimony, which includes a series of recommended actions. One of which is the enactment of state legislation, the bill before you today, to protect all individual meter users receiving bulk water service against receiving bills with excessive and fraudulent service fees above the actual use. This bill has important implications for residents throughout the state in other communities with individual meters, including those in mobile home.

The testimony from the witnesses here today will share the examples of the basis for this legislation. I urge a favorable report from the Committee on this extremely basic and important consumer protection legislation.

Thank you.