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Environment and Transportation
Committee

Chair, Non-Energy Utilities
Subcommittee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony: HB 1164 - Water Companies, Sewage Disposal Companies, and Water and Sewage Disposal Companies - Limited-Income Mechanisms

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

Hearing Date: March 31, 2026

Position: Favorable

Good afternoon Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee. For the record, I am Delegate Linda Foley and am presenting HB 1164 - Water Companies, Sewage Disposal Companies, and Water and Sewage Disposal Companies - Limited-Income Mechanisms.

HB 1164 passed the House on a bipartisan vote of 127-6.

In 2021, the legislature directed the PSC to adopt limited-income assistance mechanisms for electric and gas utilities.¹ Today, I am asking you to bring the same relief to Marylanders struggling with the rising cost of water and sewer.

HB 1164 directs the PSC to explore ways to implement a similar program for ratepayers of private water utilities.

For low-income households, rising utility costs can cause particular financial distress and crisis. In the US, monthly water and sewer bills represent a disproportionate financial burden for low income households, as high as 40% of total earnings for those at 75% of the poverty level.²

We see this crisis acutely in Western Maryland, specifically in four communities: Glenn Oaks, Bel Air, Pinto, and Highlandtown Estates communities. Ratepayers in those communities are paying exorbitant prices for their water. For example, one customer with a usual water bill was charged nearly \$300 for about 4,300 gallons.³ Comparatively, in other areas of Maryland, 4,000 gallons would cost anywhere from \$45-\$100.

HB 1164 officially requires the PSC to investigate whether private water companies can create assistance programs for low-income households. It outlines clear conditions for limited-income mechanisms and defines the PSC's role in determining when these programs are appropriate.

¹ <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2021RS/bills/hb/hb0606E.pdf>

² [LIHWAP Water Utility Affordability Survey Report](#)

³ [Water: 'A Luxury We Can't Afford'](#) low-incomeRatepayers

This bill mandates a PSC study to evaluate the feasibility of requiring these mechanisms across all water and sewage companies under its jurisdiction. The report to the governor, due in December 2026, will provide a roadmap for long-term affordability for financing and accessing the program.

I also ask the committee to adopt the technical amendment to edit a small drafting error that has been submitted.

HB 1164 could help make water and sewer utilities more affordable for Marylanders. I ask you for a favorable report with the amendment, thank you.