



TESTIMONY

COMMITTEE: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment

DATE: February 24, 2026

POSITION: Favorable

BILL: SB 686

The Maryland Municipal League (MML) offers our strong support for Senate Bill 686, legislation we believe is vital to safeguarding public health, the environment, and the well-being of every Maryland resident. For too long, municipalities across the state have faced significant and persistent challenges in addressing PFAS contamination, challenges that have only been exacerbated by repeated back-and-forth with utility companies over responsibility and remediation.

Our cities and towns have long been the frontline defenders against the dangers posed by PFAS, so-called “forever chemicals,” that threaten our drinking water, wildlife, and the fabric of our communities. Despite our vigilance, municipalities have repeatedly encountered resistance, delays, and bureaucratic runaround from the very utility providers who should serve as partners in protecting the public good.

Time after time, when alarming levels of PFAS were detected in municipal water supplies or on public lands, local governments initiated the painstaking work of identifying contamination sources and securing timely interventions. Yet, rather than receiving prompt cooperation, we have all too often found ourselves mired in endless negotiations and legal wrangling with utility companies. These entities have disputed their responsibility, insisted on further studies, raised procedural barriers, or cited ambiguous state guidelines, all while communities waited anxiously for clean water and answers. In some instances, communities were left on their own to distribute bottled water or install costly temporary filtration, as the back-and-forth with utility providers dragged on for months, or even years.

The burden has not just been operational, it has been intensely personal. Municipal officials have had to answer to concerned residents, explain unexplained illnesses, and assure parents that drinking water, once taken for granted, is still safe. Meanwhile, utilities armed with deep legal resources have too often shifted blame or delayed action, leaving local governments to shoulder both the operational and financial consequences of inaction. Faced with mounting pressure and uncertainty, municipalities have scrambled to assemble resources, navigate labyrinthine regulatory requirements, and sometimes even seek judicial intervention, just to secure the fundamental right of clean, safe water for their people.

MML represents 161 local governments and about 2 million Maryland residents.

Senate Bill 686 offers the clarity, accountability, and tangible support our communities have needed for so long. By requiring registration, disclosure, and, ultimately, responsibility from manufacturers and utilities dealing with PFAS, this legislation finally disrupts the status quo of denial and delay. It creates dedicated funding for remediation and technical support, understanding that municipalities must not be left to fend for themselves in the face of complex, multi-jurisdictional contamination events. For communities that have been forced into adversarial relationships with utility companies instead of partnerships, this bill marks a turning point, restoring balance, affirming shared responsibility, and giving local governments the tools to respond quickly and effectively to emerging threats.

The bill recognizes that true environmental protection must be inclusive, prioritizing assistance to communities that have suffered disproportionate exposure and harm. The Maryland PFAS Chemicals Protection and Remediation Fund does more than provide dollars, it acknowledges the real, human impact PFAS has had on the lives and livelihoods of Marylanders, and it backs that recognition with meaningful resources.

The Maryland Municipal League urges the General Assembly to seize this opportunity for decisive action. Senate Bill 686 is not just necessary, it is overdue. Our long experience with the trials of municipal-utility relations on PFAS has shown that incremental change and endless debate cannot resolve a crisis that demands bold, collective solutions. This is the moment for Maryland to provide leadership, restore public trust, and ensure that our cities and towns never have to face these battles alone again. We strongly support Senate Bill 686 and urge its swift passage for the health and future of every Maryland community.

For more information relating to this piece of testimony, please contact:

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