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Also, I would like to setup a meeting with you about offering some direction and advice to help the citizens in my district.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike McKay". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mike" and last name "McKay" clearly distinguishable.

Senator Mike McKay  
District 1  
Allegany, Garrett, and Washington Counties



THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT I  
GARRETT, ALLEGANY, AND WASHINGTON COUNTIES

October 27, 2025

The Honorable Wes Moore  
Governor  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Request for a State of Emergency – Bel Air, Pinto, Glen Oaks, and Highland Estates Water and Sanitation Crisis

Dear Governor Moore,

Families in the rural Allegany County communities of Bel Air, Pinto, Glen Oaks, and Highland Estates are in crisis. Many of our neighbors simply don't have reliable or affordable access to clean water and sanitation. Because of skyrocketing water bills and economic hardship, families are being forced to ration baths to only a few times a week, reuse water, haul buckets from streams, or travel to relatives' homes just to stay clean. Some can't even flush toilets or do laundry, and too many are facing shutoffs and unsafe living conditions.

Water and sewer bills in these neighborhoods often run from \$400 to \$900 a month—more than some mortgage payments—and higher than all other utility bills combined. These conditions go beyond hardship; they're a direct threat to public health, safety, and basic human dignity.

For these reasons, we are asking that you declare a State of Emergency under Maryland law for these communities. The Maryland Public Safety Article gives you the authority to act when there is a serious threat to life, health, or welfare, including when that threat comes from economic or social causes. The lack of access to clean, affordable water clearly fits that definition.

Maryland law defines an emergency as any situation that causes severe health impacts or serious social or economic disruption. That's exactly what's happening here. When families can't afford clean water, the health risks rise fast — things like infections, dehydration, and hygiene-related illnesses. Both the CDC and EPA warn that a lack of basic water and sanitation services creates dangerous conditions that can spread disease. Hundreds of homes in these rural areas are affected, and the situation is getting worse. The communities are already paying some of the highest water rates in the country, and another rate hike of 17% is set to take effect on November 1, 2025. Without help, this crisis will deepen.

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James Senate Office Building · 11 Bladen Street, Room 416 · Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3565 · 301-858-3565 · 800-492-7122 Ext. 3565

*District Office*  
100N Mechanic Street · Cumberland, Maryland 21502 · 240-362-7040

We respectfully request that you:

1. Declare a State of Emergency for Bel Air, Pinto, Glen Oaks, and Highland Estates.
2. Temporarily stop water shutoffs for residents in these areas.
3. Deploy mobile water and sanitation units to help affected families.
4. Direct the Public Service Commission to immediately review Maryland Water Service's rates and billing practices.
5. Work with the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to fast-track emergency funding and assistance programs.

These are practical, immediate steps that fall within your authority to protect health and safety during an emergency.

Once the emergency is stabilized, we believe the next steps should include:

1. Creating a Rural Appalachian Maryland Water Task Force to find long-term solutions.
2. Establishing a Maryland Water Affordability Standard to make sure no family faces impossible bills.
3. Exploring county management or acquisition of these systems to ensure accountability and fairness.
4. Working with USDA Rural Development and state funding programs to secure low-interest loans for infrastructure upgrades.

We also believe that this measure will give our Attorney General of Maryland, Mr. Anthony Brown the authority to look at the business practices of the owner of the water system. Mr. Brown has communicated that he does not have the authority unless a State of Emergency has been declared. Please see attached letter to the Attorney General sent earlier this year from the Delegation.

Governor, you have both the legal authority and moral duty to act. Families in these communities are living in conditions that no Marylander should face. The situation meets every definition of a public emergency — it's human-made, it's ongoing, and it's putting health and dignity at risk.

We urge you to declare a State of Emergency and take swift action to ensure that every family in Allegany County has access to safe, affordable, and dignified water and sanitation.

Sincerely,



Senator Mike McKay



Delegate Terry Baker



Delegate Jim Hinebaugh



Delegate Jason Buckel

Attachment: Letter to the Maryland Attorney General