



we make life better®

2311 Wilson Boulevard Suite 400 Arlington VA 22201 USA
Phone 703 524 8800 | Fax 703 562 1942
www.ahrinet.org

Testimony: House Bill 204
Drinking Water - Regulation - Control and Prevention of Waterborne Disease

Committee: Environment and Transportation Committee

Date: February 4, 2026

Position: **Oppose Unless Amended**

Re: Testimony in Support of an Amendment Requiring Scalding Warnings

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee:

I am Petra Smeltzer, Senior Director of the Air-Conditioning, Heating, and Refrigeration Institute (AHRI). I appreciate the opportunity to submit this written testimony on behalf of AHRI, the national trade association representing the heating, air conditioning, ventilation, and commercial refrigeration (HVACR), and water heating industry.

AHRI represents more than 330 manufacturers of HVACR and water heating equipment. It is an internationally recognized advocate for the HVACR industry and certifies the performance of many of the products manufactured by its members. In North America, the annual economic activity resulting from the HVACR industry is more than \$211 billion. In the United States alone, AHRI member companies, along with distributors, contractors, and technicians employ more than 700,000 people. In Maryland, the HVACR industry supports more than 8,100 jobs and contributes more than \$2.6 billion in economic activity.

AHRI supports the bill's public-health objectives but requests a narrowly tailored amendment to address a related, preventable safety risk tied to the provision requiring that public water systems send notices advising customers to set their water heaters to 130-degrees Fahrenheit. AHRI urges that these communications include a clear warning about the risk of hot water scalding and basic prevention steps.

This is not hypothetical. Scald injuries, especially to children, seniors, and people with disabilities, are a well-documented risk associated with domestic hot water systems. Water temperatures above 125-degrees Fahrenheit can cause serious burns in seconds.

The amendment is simple:

- It does **not** mandate new equipment.
- It does **not** impose a new inspection regime.
- It does **not** expand liability for public water systems.

It simply requires that when public water systems send letters to customers, those letters include a standardized warning (see below) about scalding risks and basic prevention measures—such as testing the water temperature by hand before bathing.

"WARNING: Water temperature over 125-degrees Fahrenheit can cause severe burns instantly or death from scalds. Children, disabled and elderly are at highest risk of being scalded. Feel water before bathing or showering."

Public water systems are already a trusted source of safety information. Including a short, clear warning in existing customer communications is a low-cost step that can help prevent high-cost harm—and it is an efficient, defensible, and proportionate way to address the risk.

AHRI has conferred with the bill's lead proponent, the Alliance to Prevent Legionnaires' Disease in Maryland, and understands that the organization supports this amendment. AHRI, therefore, urges the committee to adopt the recommended amendment requiring scald warning notices in customer letters.

Thank you for your consideration. Should you have any questions or require additional information, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Petra M. Smeltzer
Senior Director of State Government Affairs
Air-Conditioning, Heating, and Refrigeration Institute
2311 Wilson Blvd., Suite 400
Arlington, VA 22201
Cell: 202-304-9995