



Testimony - HB 204, Drinking Water - Regulation - Control and Prevention of
Waterborne Disease

Favorable

House Environment & Transportation Committee

February 4, 2026

Christopher C. Cano, MPA

Director of Political & Legislative Affairs on Behalf of SEIU Local 500

Honorable Chairman Korman & Members of the House Environment and Transportation
Committee:

SEIU Local 500 represents thousands of school employees, higher education workers, and public service professionals across Maryland. Our members are custodians, paraeducators, maintenance staff, food service workers, faculty, and graduate assistants—workers who are on the frontlines every day ensuring that our schools and campuses remain safe, functional, and welcoming spaces for learning.

Clean, safe water is not optional in educational settings—it is foundational.

HB 204 recognizes that Legionella and other waterborne pathogens pose a serious and preventable risk, particularly in large, complex buildings like schools and university facilities. These are environments with aging infrastructure, intermittent water use, and high-risk populations, including children, immunocompromised students, and workers who cannot simply “opt out” of unsafe conditions.

This bill takes meaningful, evidence-based steps to address those risks by:

- Requiring minimum disinfectant residual levels throughout public water systems to prevent bacterial growth;

- Mandating timely notification when disruptions in water distribution occur—information that school administrators, staff, and families need to respond quickly and appropriately;
- Establishing investigation and testing protocols when cases of Legionnaires' disease are reported, improving accountability and transparency; and
- Requiring covered buildings to implement water management programs consistent with nationally recognized ASHRAE standards—an important safeguard for schools and higher education facilities with complex plumbing systems.

For school workers, these protections are deeply personal. When water systems fail, it is often our members who are exposed first and longest—cleaning facilities, repairing systems, assisting students, and keeping buildings operational even when conditions are unsafe. Too often, workers are left in the dark about water disruptions or potential exposure risks. HB 204 changes that by centering transparency, prevention, and public accountability.

For students, especially young children, safe water is inseparable from safe learning environments. No student should be asked to learn in a building where preventable environmental hazards put their health at risk. HB 204 helps ensure that schools are places of learning—not sources of illness.

SEIU Local 500 also strongly supports the bill's emphasis on public reporting, consumer education, and reinvestment of penalties into public health efforts. These provisions ensure that enforcement is not merely punitive, but proactive and preventative—focused on protecting communities before harm occurs.

In short, House Bill 204 is a worker safety bill, a student safety bill, and a public health bill. It reflects the simple but powerful principle that everyone—regardless of where they work or learn—deserves access to clean, safe water.

For these reasons, SEIU Local 500 urges the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 204.

Thank you for your time and consideration.