

The Honorable Joseline A. Peña Melnyk

Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee

House Office Building, Room 241

6 Bladen Street

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support for HB 0204, Drinking Water, Control and Prevention of Waterborne Disease

Dear Chair Peña Melnyk,

Maryland Latinos Unidos respectfully supports House Bill 0204, Drinking Water, Control and Prevention of Waterborne Disease. HB 0204 is before the House Health and Government Operations Committee during the 2026 Legislative Session and strengthens public health protections related to drinking water safety.

HB 0204 enhances monitoring, prevention, and response measures for waterborne disease, reinforcing the State's responsibility to ensure safe and reliable drinking water for all residents. Access to clean water is a foundational public health issue, yet disparities in infrastructure and environmental oversight leave some communities more vulnerable than others.

Latino and immigrant communities are more likely to reside in older housing stock, under resourced municipalities, or rural areas where water systems face aging infrastructure and limited capacity. These conditions increase the risk of exposure to contaminants and waterborne illness, particularly for children, elders, and individuals with compromised immune systems.

By strengthening prevention and oversight, HB 0204 helps reduce avoidable health risks and associated medical costs. Preventing waterborne disease is not only a public health imperative but also an equity issue, as illness linked to unsafe water can result in missed work, lost wages, and long term health consequences for families with limited economic flexibility.

The implications for Latino and immigrant Marylanders are clear. Reliable access to safe drinking water supports healthier communities, educational stability for children, and workforce participation for adults. MLU can support implementation by partnering on community education, advocating for transparency, and ensuring that public health information reaches households in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways.

Maryland Latinos Unidos urges a favorable report on HB 0204. Protecting drinking water protects families, communities, and the fundamental right to health and safety.

Sincerely,

Carlos Orbe, Jr.

Communications and Public Affairs Specialist

Maryland Latinos Unidos

corbejr@mdlatinosunidos.org
