



HOUSE ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

House Bill 204

Drinking Water - Regulation - Control and Prevention of Waterborne Disease

February 4, 2026

Information

Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony on House Bill 204. House Bill 204 establishes a wide-ranging statewide framework to prevent waterborne diseases – particularly Legionella bacteria – by regulating public water systems and mandating building-level water management practices. The bill sets “minimum detectable disinfectant residual levels,” establishes “disinfectant testing requirements,” and directs water suppliers to maintain records and provide mandatory public notices following disruptions in the water distribution system, including pressure drops, service line replacements, or treatment changes. The bill also requires “mandatory investigations” of all reported Legionnaires’ disease cases. In addition, the bill requires owners/operators of “covered buildings” – as defined under ASHRAE 188-2018 – to implement a compliant “Water Management Program (WMP)” by October 1, 2027, outlining building water systems, risk points, monitoring plans, and corrective action protocols.

The University System of Maryland (USM) is comprised of twelve distinguished institutions, and three regional centers. We award eight out of every ten bachelor’s degrees in the State. Each of USM’s 12 institutions has a distinct and unique approach to the mission of educating students and promoting the economic, intellectual, and cultural growth of its surrounding community. These institutions are located throughout the state, from Western Maryland to the Eastern Shore, with the flagship campus in the Washington suburbs. The USM includes three Historically Black Institutions, comprehensive institutions and research universities, and the country’s largest public online institution.

The University of Maryland, College Park (UMCP) operates its own extensive water distribution system, which serves tens of thousands of people daily. Although its water is provided by WSSC, the university would have to now comply with House Bill 204’s expanded testing and reporting requirements across approximately “250 buildings.” To meet these obligations – particularly maintaining and documenting minimum disinfectant residual levels – the campus anticipates the need to hire additional plumbers dedicated to water testing and monitoring ensuring compliance with state-mandated standards.

Towson University (TU) Towson anticipates significant operational and capital impacts. Although House Bill 204 does not require monochloramine treatment, TU is considering an enhanced compliance model involving “building-level monochloramine booster stations” in roughly 60 buildings. This represents a \$3 million one-time investment and \$500,000–\$620,000 in annual operating costs beginning in FY27. This approach provides stronger engineered controls and greater regulatory defensibility but goes beyond the minimum statutory requirements.

The University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) would face substantial staffing and operational demands due to the bill’s requirements for formal water management planning, routine water testing, and documentation and anticipates hiring an external consultant at \$100,000 annually, plus an additional \$150,000 for testing and another \$20,000 for supplies, bringing total the anticipated total annual costs to roughly \$400,000.

The University of Baltimore (UBalt) expects increased operational responsibilities connected to building-level water management systems. This includes acquiring new water treatment equipment, water testing instruments, and software needed to administer a compliant Water Management Program. Efforts will also require regular monitoring of cooling towers, tanks, and other “high-risk” systems under ASHRAE 188-2018. The institution anticipates both initial capital investments and ongoing maintenance and testing costs, though precise totals remain undetermined.

Lastly, the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) expects that House Bill 204 may increase drinkable water delivery costs statewide and will require all “covered buildings” on campus to develop water management programs aligned with ASHRAE 188-2018. Given that UMBC houses numerous high-risk systems – such as cooling towers – the institution anticipates significant new compliance obligations around system descriptions, hazard identification, water monitoring, and corrective actions. Although UMBC cannot yet quantify exact costs, they may be significant and include both upfront planning expenses and continued testing and administrative workload. Raising water heater set points to 130°F, as proposed, would also necessitate replacing or upgrading scald-protection components on existing systems set at lower temperatures.

The USM appreciates the opportunity to provide this information regarding House Bill 204.



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