



The Maryland Department of the Environment
Secretary Serena McIlwain

House Bill 204

Drinking Water - Regulation - Control and Prevention of Waterborne Disease

Position: Oppose
Committee: Environment and Transportation
Date: February 4, 2026
From: Alex Butler, Deputy Director of Government Relations

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) **OPPOSES** HB 204.

Bill Summary

House Bill 204 proposes an expansion of Maryland's water safety protocols to further protect public health. To achieve this, the bill: (1) establishes new disinfectant levels for water systems; (2) tasks MDE with developing new regulations for nitrification and construction monitoring; (3) introduces enhanced notification protocols for conditions related to Legionella; (4) establishes a new investigative and reporting framework for procedural compliance; (5) implements water management programs for specific building types; and (6) launches comprehensive public education and data transparency initiatives.

Position Rationale

MDE shares the sponsor's commitment to protecting public health and ensuring the highest water quality for Marylanders. The Department appreciates the elevation of this important issue, but has identified the need for significant fiscal support to implement the bill as drafted.

Overseeing the bill's requirements across Maryland's 3,200 public water systems with the anticipated influx of approximately 695,000 annual data points represents a technical and administrative workload that exceeds current staffing and budgetary resources. Additionally, the proposed 0.5 mg/L chlorine standard may require public water systems to invest in significant infrastructure upgrades to manage disinfection byproducts. These costs could inadvertently place local systems at risk of non-compliance with federal standards.

While MDE shares the sponsor's dedication to advancing water quality standards and appreciates the attention brought to this critical issue, the Department must respectfully request an **UNFAVORABLE** report for HB 204 given the fiscal challenges with implementation.

Contact: Alex Butler, Deputy Director of Government Relations
Phone: 443-695-7478, Email: alex.butler@maryland.gov