



David J. Caporate, President
William R. Atkinson, Commissioner
Creade V. Brodie, Jr., Commissioner
Jason M. Bennett, CPA, Administrator
T. Lee Beeman, Esq, Attorney

February 27, 2026

Position: SUPPORT HB1187 – Water Companies and Sewage Disposal Companies – Eminent Domain Proceedings and Service Rates.

Dear Members of the Maryland General Assembly,

On behalf of the Allegany County Commissioners, I write to express our support for HB 1187 – Water Companies and Sewage Disposal Companies – Eminent Domain Proceedings and Service Rates.

This legislation could significantly assist Allegany County in our efforts to secure rate relief for residents in the Bel Air, Highland Estates, Pinto, and Glen Oaks water systems. Customers in these systems are currently burdened with exceptionally high rates under Maryland Water Service. The systems are in the process of being sold to American Water Service, and the County is actively evaluating every available option to obtain rate relief for our residents, including the potential use of eminent domain. As we evaluate the idea of eminent domain, we face a substantial hurdle. If Allegany County obtains the utility through condemnation, we then face the hurdle of completing critical infrastructure work necessary to provide safe, reliable, and affordable service to our citizens. When a government entity is forced to condemn a private utility through an eminent domain taking in order to provide safe, reliable, and affordable water service to its citizens, the private utility should not be afforded the opportunity to benefit from its neglect of the system. If a private utility has been neglected to the point that government intervention is required, the cost of the necessary improvements should not be born by the citizens of a community, but instead should be carried by the private utility.

HB 1187 would provide important protections for customers during the pendency of eminent domain proceedings and could help reduce the overall financial impact on residents at the conclusion of that process. These safeguards are critical as we explore solutions to address the significant disparities in water and sewer rates.

At present, residents within these systems are paying as much as 65% more for water and sewer services than residents outside of these districts. These rate levels are unsustainable and impose a substantial hardship on families in our community. We are committed to pursuing all reasonable avenues to alleviate this burden.

For these reasons, we respectfully request favorable consideration of HB 1187.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Bennett".

Jason Bennett, CPA
County Administrator
Allegany County Government

701 Kelly Road
Cumberland, MD 21502
E countyclerk@alleganygov.org
T 301 777-5911
alleganygov.org