



## Senate Bill 513

### *Environment – Collection and Reporting of Drinking Water and Wastewater Data and Information – Requirements*

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Education, Energy, the Environment  
Committee

Date: February 23, 2023

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** SB 513. This bill would require counties that operate water utilities to provide the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) with detailed customer, system, and financial data on a monthly or annual basis for inclusion in a public database. This legislation is a burdensome mandate and could pose significant ratepayer cost increases without materially promoting better service.

Counties fully embrace the idea of transparency. Public water system users already have various ways to raise concerns about service and rates, including directly to their locally elected officials.

SB 513 imposes an arbitrary and burdensome mandate on counties, requiring no fewer than 55 points of information and empowers MDE to go even further and enumerate additional data points at their discretion. The Maryland Association of Municipal Wastewater Agencies – the association representing the vast majority of wastewater systems in Maryland – points out that many of these data points are duplicative, unnecessary, and/or not within the purview of a water utility to aggregate.

Additionally, many counties project that should this reporting requirement be implemented, they would have to dedicate at least one full-time staff person, if not more, to fulfill the requirements of this bill. Water systems are already facing difficulty with recruiting and retaining staff. This arbitrary and burdensome report only serves to further stretch already constrained time and resources – and would surely lead to higher ratepayer costs.

While counties agree with the overarching intent of SB 513, this bill prescribes arbitrary and unrealistic reporting requirements with a questionable end result. For these reasons, MACo **OPPOSES** SB 513 and urges an **UNFAVORABLE** report.