



CITY OF BALTIMORE
MAYOR BRANDON M. SCOTT

TO	The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
FROM	Khalil Zaied, Director, Department of Public Works <i>Khalil Zaied</i>
CC	Mayor's Office of Government Relations
DATE	June 30, 2025
SUBJECT	25-0050 Water Bill – Tenant Right to Review

Position: Without Recommendation

BILL SYNOPSIS

The purpose of City Council Bill 25-0050 (the Bill) is to enhance residential tenant protections by ensuring access to water and wastewater billing information. Specifically, it requires the Department of Public Works (DPW) to provide tenants with direct access to their water or wastewater bills upon request, provided they submit appropriate lease documentation. The Bill also extends similar rights to residential owner-occupants who can present proper documentation and demonstrate that the property in question is their principal residence. The legislation, moreover, mandates that DPW respond to such requests in a timely manner. Finally, the Bill establishes a uniform effective date for implementation of these provisions.

SUMMARY OF POSITION

Article 13, § 7-3(a)(2) in the Housing and Urban Renewal section of the City Code presently outlines that a tenant may request, as the landlord's designee under Maryland's Public Information Act, copies of any account records for the water or wastewater account associated with their rental unit. This provision ensures that tenants have the right to access relevant billing information, allowing them to verify the accuracy of any charges related to water or wastewater services that they are required to pay or reimburse to the landlord.

In accordance with the current City Code, DPW will ensure that all walk-in center staff are trained to provide tenants with copies of water bills upon request, provided the tenant presents adequate identification (such as a driver's license or government-issued ID) that verifies that they live at the address for which the bill is being requested. Currently, staff are not required to review lease agreements to determine whether the lease includes provisions for the tenant to pay water or wastewater charges.

City Council Bill 25-0050 would require tenants to submit a lease document to obtain billing information, placing an additional burden on tenants that is not currently required. Furthermore, the addition of section (f) seems to add an additional burden for a property owner who is trying

to access water and wastewater billing records related to their own property. It does not seem logical to require a property owner to submit documentation that they occupied a given property during a certain time period to receive records that they are already entitled to as the owner. The addition of this section also seems to imply that if a property owner does not occupy a given residence, they may not be entitled to receive a copy of the water bill.