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Water Bill Problems History:

- 1) In 2016 my husband and I received a bill for approximately \$900, with no change in our consumption. DPW told us to get a licensed plumber to verify if we had a leak in or around the house. At a cost of \$100 we did that. We had no leak. We were told our only recourse was to go to the City Ombudsman. My husband, who was dying of pancreatic cancer at the time, went to the ombudsman who gave us a letter saying we should not be required to pay the bill. My husband met with the water administration personally to deliver the letter. We received a letter in return from DPW saying it was within their rights to override the ombudsman's request, and that we had to pay the bill. My husband, since he was not well, accidentally left the Ombudsman's letter with the DPW person, so we do not have a copy. He passed away in April of 2017 at which point I was so distraught I paid the bill.
- 2) In October, 2020, I got a bill for \$387. I contacted DPW. This time they had me do strange checks with grape juice in all my toilets over a period of hours, photograph them, and send them to the water department to determine I had no leak. I did as they requested, and they agreed I had no leak. I filled in a Water and Sewer Adjustment Request, and after considerable back and forth, they offered to reimburse me only \$58.89. In order to accept it, I had to admit that it was a leak on my property, and I wasn't allowed to make a complaint again for 3 years. Given that I had to admit to a lie, that the overage was approximately \$300, and a much worse bill could come at any time, I declined and just paid again.
- 3) For the following nine months, our water bill average was \$63. We then received a bill for \$216.73. It said it was for usage from July 9, 2021 to August 9, 2021. The remarkable amount was entirely disputable **as we were 6,000 miles away in Israel for the entire month of July**, returning only on July 30. It showed minimal usage for 3 of the 4 weeks, but very high usage one of the weeks **when no one was in the house**.

At this point, DPW owes me conservatively \$1,200. As importantly as the money, is that this experience has eroded my faith in Baltimore. Since I moved to Baltimore 8 ½ years ago, my husband and I were mugged at gunpoint in front of our home, my daughter's two cars were stolen and they found an intruder in their home in the middle of the night, **and they had the same issue with the water company**, including having their ombudsman's written request denied. They left Baltimore City. While I am still here, the water department's utter lack of concern for my welfare has been worse than the trauma of the other incidents.

Sincerely, Rachel Geller Rosenheck