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| F R O M | NAME & TITLE | Terry F. Hickey, Director | CITY of BALTIMORE M E M O |  |
| | AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS | Mayor's Office of Human Services (MOHS) 7 E. Redwood Street, 5 th Fl. | | |
| | SUBJECT | City Council Bill Report 18-0307 | | |

DATE: May 16, 2019
TO: Members, City Council Taxation, Finance & Economic Development Committee
FROM: Mayor's Office of Human Services (MOHS)
POSITION: FAVORABLE
RE: Council Bill 18-0307 – Water Accountability & Equity Act

INTRODUCTION – City Council Bill 18-0307 specifies when water service may be cut off, institutes a revised system for entering a payment plan, establishes a water affordability program for those falling below a certain threshold and streamlines the process for water bill dispute resolution by creating the Office of Water-Customer Advocacy and Appeals and a Committee for Office Oversight.

AGENCY/DEPARTMENT POSITION –

The Mayor's Office of Human Services (MOHS) appreciates the opportunity to review and comment on this important legislation.

Through its various divisions (Community Action Partnership, Head Start and Homeless Services), MOHS staff work with some of the city's most vulnerable residents. MOHS' Office of Home Energy Assistance (OHEP) serves more than 20,000 Baltimore City residents at five CAP Centers, many of whom are at or below 175% of the federal poverty level, providing more than \$20M in assistance with home electric and heating bills. CAP staff, since the start of the most recent fiscal year, have also processed over 2,000 applications for water assistance.

Front line MOHS staff witness on a daily basis the impact of poverty and the importance of access to effective and efficient utility assistance. Case managers at CAP centers are hearing more and more from low income Baltimore residents, primarily seniors and families, who cannot afford the rising cost of water. The inability of households to pay basic utilities can also jeopardize stable housing which leaves families vulnerable to experiencing homelessness.

The Mayor's Office of Human Services is in support of any attempt to create a comprehensive water assistance program for constituents. In fact, MOHS has initiated conversations with the Department of Public Works in the interests of assisting with the implementation of such a program. For this reason, the agency is recommending a favorable report on Council Bill 18-0307.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at Terry.Hickey@baltimorecity.gov or 410-396-7370.