

Stephanie Wiggins
Homeowner
Written Testimony for File #21-0007R

The Department of Public Works is broken, specifically the water division. While customers such as I have been more than understanding regarding COVID-19 and the delay it caused in billing, what is harder to fathom is both the discrepancy in bills between City and County residents, and the inability to get an account through DPW to start water services.

Firstly, I am a homeowner in both Baltimore City as well as Baltimore County. My home in the City was occupied by two people, there was only one bathroom, dishes were hand-washed, and clothes were washed in the washer twice per week. The water bill for this house was roughly \$75 - \$85 per month.

In contrast, my home in the County was occupied by four people, there are three bathrooms, a dishwasher that is used daily, and clothes that are washed in the washer at least four days per week. The bill for this home, during the same period as my home in the City, was roughly \$75 - \$85 per quarter.

I am unable to pull water bill statements because that is not an option on the Baltimorecity.gov website. However, the DPW staff are more than welcome to compare my bills from both houses if they have access to previous billing statements.

Secondly, in addition to the gross disparity in billing amounts, the ability to get service in the City needs immediate revamping. The customer service is horrendous, and the communication between DPW and their customers is even worse, except for one employee, Karen Armstead. Ms. Armstead was the only DPW that was helpful to me when receiving my water meter.

In addition to being a homeowner, I also started a business in January 2021 in the hopes that I can rehabilitate homes in the City and sell them to community members for a price that does not force them to sell their first-born. To do this, though, I need water service turned on.

On January 20, 2021 I contacted DPW for the first time to have water turned on at one of my properties, and I just received the meter for that about a week and a half ago, after having to email DPW and my councilman, Anthony Glover, on an almost daily basis. If not for Mr. Glover, Mr. Simpson, and Ms. Leone, I am more than sure I would still be waiting for an initial response from January. For this obstacle I do have emails as proof, and you are more than willing to view them if you would like. I feel it would give a better picture of just how customers are being treated.

Allow me to close by saying that I am not, and have not, asked for anything for free, for a discount, or for any other special treatment. What I am trying to do is to make Baltimore City a nicer place to live, to bring back the charm to Charm City, and more than anything, I would like to do my part in helping to pay for the salary increase that the head of DPW just received, as reported earlier this month, but I can not do that without service, and I do not think that City homeowners should pay the entire bill.