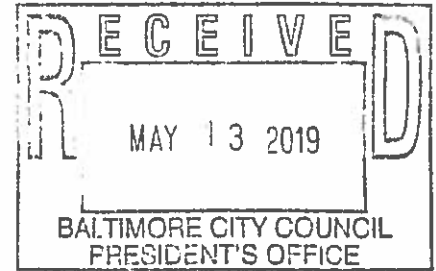




BALTIMORE CITY
DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING &
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



MEMORANDUM

To: The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
c/o Natawna Austin, Executive Secretary

From: Michael Braverman, Housing Commissioner *MB*

Date: May 9, 2019

Re: **City Council Bill 18-0307 – Water Accountability and Equity Act**

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has reviewed City Council Bill 18-0307, which increases the availability or affordability of basic water and wastewater service to low-income consumers and assuring a fair process for all consumers before the City exercises its authority to cut off water services, impose liens, or take similar action and establishes a Water-for-All discount Program and an Office of Water-Customer Advocacy and Appeals.

DHCD is supportive of the intent of the bill and would defer to the Departments of Public Works and Finance on the passage of City Council Bill 18-0307.

If enacted, this bill will require the Department of Public Works (DPW) to adopt and enforce rules and regulations for a Water-For-All Discount Program for residential and tenant water utility customers whose annual household income is less than 200% of the Federal Government's official poverty income guidelines.

The bill will also require the establishment of an Office of Water-Customer Advocacy and Appeals (Office) that is independent of DPW but work in full cooperation and collaboration with DPW staff and contractors. The Office would address all requests for assistance relating to water and wastewater billing, service cut-offs, or lack of notice of billing-related issues. The Office would also establish a Committee for Office Oversight to review and evaluate the activities and operations of the Office and provide advice, guidance and recommendations for new or modified policies and procedures.

The bill would also reduce the interest rate on redemption of residential real property from tax sales to 5% from 12% if the property is listed in SDAT as the owner's principle residence.

If the bill is enacted it does not change the current process to support HCD with blight elimination efforts, which allows DPW to cut off water to properties that meet the requirement of a vacant structure as outlined in the Baltimore City Building Code, if damage to adjacent property is imminent or for properties that are scheduled for demolition.

F, refers to DPW's Finance

