



MEMORANDUM

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

From: Alice Kennedy, Acting Housing Commissioner *AK*

Date: November 5, 2020

Re: City Council Bill 20-0626 Water Accountability and Equity Act - Modifications

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has reviewed City Council Bill 20-0626 for the purpose of For the purpose of clarifying tenants' access to programs at the Department of Public Works; protecting against conflicts of interest by employees at the Office of Water-Customer Advocacy and Appeals and by hearing officers and their overseers at the Environmental Review Board; improving and specifying data collection metrics by the Office of Water-Customer Advocacy and Appeals; clarifying a customer's right to dispute determinations by the Department of Public Works before the Department, the Office, or the ECB; deleting the Director of Public Works or the Director's designee from the list of members of the Committee for Office Oversight and replacing that member with the Mayor or the Mayor's designee; modifying the effective date of the "Water Accountability and Equity Act", as enacted by Ordinance 20-336 and modified in part by this Ordinance; mandating the publication for public comment of all proposed new or amended rules and re...

If enacted, City Council Bill 20-0626 would amend City Council Ordinance 20-0336, the Water Accountability and Equity Act. The legislation would make several changes to the existing ordinance including amending section 7-3 of Article 13 of the City Code to require landlords to amend existing leases or form new leases with any tenant that pays for water or wastewater. The Bill seeks to add language to each lease that says that the owner will register the tenant as an additional party on the owner's account at the Department of Public Works. (DPW) The Bill will allow all tenant-water-utility customers to receive any discount, payment arrangement or anything else requested of DPW by providing evidence that the owner or managing operator of the property, was notified of the tenant's request and withheld participation in the request. Additionally, if adopted the Bill would require that certain data be collected about water billing disputes and customer service.

Section 2-18(e) of the legislation addresses the hiring of employees of the Office of Customer advocacy. The employees of the Office of Customer Advocacy would have to be "physically separated from" DPW. The legislation also provides that the "right to dispute a determination by the department before the Department, the Office or the ECB may not be limited, except as otherwise stated in this article or in case of an abuse of process. Finally, the legislation provides that a customer can seek assistance or appeal to the Office of Customer Advocacy or appeal to the Environmental Control Board (ECB) at any time.

DHCD defers to the Department of Public Works and the Law Department on the passage of Council Bill 20-0626.

AK:sm

cc: Mr. Blendy, Nicholas, *Mayor's Office of Government Relations*

Bernard C. "Jack" Young, Mayor • **Alice Kennedy**, Acting Housing Commissioner

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