



House Bill 204

Drinking Water - Regulation - Control and Prevention of Waterborne Disease

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Environment & Transportation Committee

Date: February 4, 2026

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES HB 204**. While counties share the bill's underlying goal of protecting public health, HB 204 would impose an arbitrary and impractical mandate on county governments that operate public drinking water systems. In doing so, it departs from established best practices, would introduce significant delays into planned projects, and would drive new costs that ultimately fall on system users.

No local officials want unsafe water in their community. Counties that operate public water systems already prioritize health and safety, and many have long maintained standards and operating practices that meet—or exceed—applicable federal and state requirements. The concern with HB 204 is not the shared objective of safe utilities, but the prescriptive approach the bill would require.

Specifically, HB 204 would mandate elevated disinfectant residuals of free chlorine and monochloramine beyond levels recommended by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Maryland Department of the Environment, and such increases may create additional public health risks due to overexposure to these chemicals. Moreover, increasing system-wide disinfectant levels does not address the primary driver of many Legionella risks: building-level water management practices. Facility plumbing conditions, water temperatures, stagnation, and maintenance protocols—particularly in buildings serving vulnerable populations—are often the most critical factors in prevention and response.

MACo also shares concerns raised by the Maryland Association of Municipal Wastewater Agencies (MAMWA), of which many counties are members.

Counties welcome continued partnership with the State on evidence-based strategies to strengthen drinking water safety. However, HB 204 substitutes a rigid, one-size-fits-all mandate for the existing best-practice framework for prevention, containment, and notification. For these reasons, MACo urges the Committee to issue an **UNFAVORABLE** report for HB 204.