

## Individual Water Meter Transparency

Payment for utilities in multifamily housing usually includes management receiving the bill for the whole building and then splitting it up per unit based on a number of factors (square footage, household size, etc.) Alternatively, buildings can install individual meters in each unit, which measures the exact utility usage in order to estimate the most accurate bill. It is common to see individual electric meters and the state has established statute and regulations to ensure that these meters are accurate and to provide consumer protections for the residents.

However, the development of individual meters for water usage is newer and the statute has not caught up to include the protections we see for electric meters. In a case study done by the Montgomery County Office of Consumer Protection<sup>1</sup>, they describe the deficiencies in the statute and establish the need to ensure protections for tenants in buildings where water is sub-metered in this way. This legislation seeks to address that concern and mirror the protections already established for individual electric meters.

### **This bill will:**

- ✓ Require adequate record keeping of the water bill process and the formulas used to calculate individual water costs, which residents can request to see.
- ✓ Limit water or sewage charges to what is actually charged by the water utility.
- ✓ Protect residents from having to pay for excess water leaks or damage that the building owner is responsible for.
- ✓ Provide protections for tenants so that unpaid, disputed bills are not considered to be unpaid rent and cannot be used as grounds for eviction.
- ✓ Set the maximum administration and billing fee for individual water meters at \$1.00 per meter per month, which is what the statute currently allows for electric submetering.
- ✓ Require the installation of leak detection devices for each meter, which residents can request to see.
- ✓ Establish complaint procedures for residents to follow if problems arise.

For more information please contact:

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1. *The Grand Apartments-Review of Water Billing Practices*. Montgomery County Office of Consumer Protection, 5 May 2025.