



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE

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To: Lonnie R. Robbins
Chief Administrative Officer

Through Stanley J. Milesky
Director of Finance

From: Rafiu O. Ighile
Deputy Director of Finance

Subject: Testimony for CB __-2014

The proposed legislation would authorize the County to accept donations from our Water and Sewer customers to help fund the County's proposed Help to Others (H₂O) program. Funds collected will be used to assist Howard County Water & Sewer customers facing financial hardship with paying their water and sewer bills and the possible disconnection of service. The Departments of Finance, Public Works, and Citizen Services are working jointly to develop and issue a Grant RFP to select an agency to administer the program. Upon commencement of the program, the Department of Finance's Division of Water & Sewer Billing & Customer Service would then be able to refer customers seeking assistance to the selected agency.

We are proposing to collect these donations from customers as part of their quarterly water and sewer bill payments. Customers who choose to participate will be able to "round-up" their bill to the next highest dollar or make a flat donation of an amount of their choosing. Customers will also be able to subscribe to the program, agreeing to have their bill rounded up with each billing.

In addition, a mobile app (Utilli) and website, that are also currently under development, will allow customers to both sign up for the Round-Up Program and/or make a one-time donation.

The Bureau of Utilities has agreed to provide the initial funding for the program. In hopes of making this fund self-sustaining, we are requesting legislation to allow us to accept donations to this fund from our customers. Such "round-up" programs have been successfully used by other water utilities to provide assistance for their customers.

cc: Jennifer Sager
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