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House Corporations
Rhode Island State House
Providence, RI 02903

RE: H7872

The Pawtucket Water Supply Board would like to take the opportunity to convey our opposition to H 7872, which would establish civil penalties for extended service interruptions by public drinking water suppliers.

Most water service interruptions are caused by circumstances beyond a utility's reasonable control and could include water main breaks, precautionary shutdowns, planned outages due to infrastructure improvements, and contractor damage to water lines. Whenever possible, the PWSB provides notice to any customer that would be included in a shutdown, but in many instances the situation requires immediate accident in order to minimize property or road damage and to minimize the chance of water contamination.

In any case, it is always the goal of the PWSB to restore service as quickly as possible, and we take great pride in the professionalism and efficiency of our repair crews. As you can imagine, these emergency shutdowns usually happen at the worse times and is totally out of control of the PWSB.

Civil penalties as would be assessed under this legislation seem completely arbitrary and would in no way reduce the duration of customer outages. Any fines assessed would ultimately be borne by ratepayers, increasing water bills for families and businesses across the state without delivering corresponding benefits in reliability or resilience.

The Rhode Island Division of Public Utilities already has an established regulatory framework, including oversight, a complaint process, and enforcement authority to address water service issues. These existing mechanisms are effective and appropriate for ensuring accountability.

For these reasons, we strongly urge the committee to oppose passage of H 7872. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this legislation and for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

James DeCelles, PE
Chief Engineer