



April 7, 2026

House Corporations Committee  
RI State House  
One Capitol Hill  
Providence, RI 02903  
Email: HouseCorporations@rilegislature.gov

RE: House Bill H7872

Honorable Chairman Solomon and Committee Members,

My name is Stephen Coutu, and I am the Executive Director and Chief Engineer of the Bristol County Water Authority (BCWA) which provides drinking water to the residents and businesses for the Towns of Barrington, Warren, and Bristol. The BCWA opposes the proposed amendments as outlined within the House Bill H7872, which establishes civil penalties on drinking water suppliers for extended service interruptions.

The BCWA strongly supports the goal of ensuring safe, reliable, and continuous access to public drinking water. However, this legislation, as currently drafted, imposes unrealistic and counterproductive requirements on public water suppliers.

This past winter was a difficult one for water suppliers as many systems dealt with multiple water main breaks due to the extreme temperatures and aging water system infrastructure. Public water suppliers respond to these emergency situations as quickly and efficiently as possible to minimize customer shut-downs. This proposal which mandates restoration of service to at least 90% of affected customers within a specified period of time (four hours) of an unplanned outage does not adequately account for the complex and variable nature of water system failures. Even well-managed and responsive water systems may be unable to meet this rigid standard despite acting diligently and in good faith.

Additionally, the proposed financial penalties—\$250 per customer per hour, up to \$5,000 per customer per day—are excessively punitive and could impose severe financial strain on public water suppliers, particularly smaller or municipally operated systems. These costs may ultimately be passed on to ratepayers, placing an additional burden on residents rather than improving service reliability.

For the reasons noted above, the BCWA opposes the amendments to Chapter 46-13 as proposed under House Bill H 7872. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Stephen H. Coutu, P.E.  
Executive Director and Chief Engineer