



March 31, 2026

House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources
State House
One Capitol Hill
Providence, RI 02903

SENT VIA EMAIL: HouseEnvironmentandNaturalResources@rilegislature.gov

RE: H7918 – Position: Oppose

Honorable Chair Bennett and Members of the House Committee on Environment and Natural Resources,

My name is David L. Simmons P.E., Executive Director/Chief Engineer of the Kent County Water Authority, and I respectfully submit this written testimony in opposition to H7918, which proposes limiting inspection and certification of backflow prevention devices to once every ten years.

Backflow prevention assemblies are critical mechanical devices installed to protect public drinking water systems from contamination caused by cross connections within private plumbing systems. These devices prevent water from flowing backward into the public distribution system where contaminants such as chemicals, fertilizers, industrial fluids, or pathogens may be present.

Backflow prevention assemblies contain springs, rubber seals, and check valves that operate under varying hydraulic conditions. Over time these components are subject to wear, corrosion, mineral buildup, and debris fouling. Because failure is typically not visible externally, periodic performance testing is necessary to verify that the devices continue to function properly.

Rhode Island already has an established statutory and regulatory framework that requires cross connection control and routine verification of backflow prevention assemblies.

Rhode Island General Laws §46-13-22 Cross Connection Control authorizes the Rhode Island Department of Health to require public water systems to implement cross connection control programs designed to protect public drinking water supplies. These programs include requirements for the installation, inspection, and maintenance of backflow prevention devices.

In addition, the Rhode Island Plumbing Code, which adopts provisions of the International Plumbing Code, requires that backflow prevention assemblies be tested after installation and periodically thereafter to ensure proper operation. Public water systems implement these provisions through cross connection control programs that require annual testing by certified testers.

This annual testing requirement is consistent with practices used across the northeastern United States and throughout the country.

Neighboring states maintain similar requirements:

- Massachusetts requires testing of backflow prevention devices through its drinking water regulations and cross connection control programs, with some devices tested semiannually depending on hazard classification.
- Connecticut requires annual testing of reduced pressure zone devices and double check valve assemblies under its public health regulations.
- New Hampshire requires annual testing for low hazard installations and twice-yearly testing for higher hazard facilities.
- Maine water systems operate cross connection control programs that require annual testing of testable backflow assemblies.
- Vermont water utilities also require annual or more frequent testing depending on the degree of hazard associated with the connection.
- Nearby states follow the same approach. New York requires annual testing and reporting of backflow prevention assemblies, and New Jersey requires annual testing as part of their plumbing and cross connection control requirements.

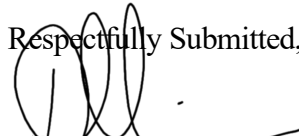
This consistent regional approach reflects the widely accepted understanding among water utilities and public health agencies that mechanical backflow assemblies must be regularly verified to ensure they function properly. Utilities routinely find that a measurable percentage of devices fail during annual testing programs. These failures can then be repaired before contamination occurs.

Extending the testing interval to ten years would represent a major departure from the practices used by Rhode Island and every surrounding state. Such a long interval would allow mechanical failures to remain undetected for extended periods and would weaken one of the most important safeguards protecting the public drinking water system.

Backflow prevention assemblies serve as one of the final barriers preventing contamination of drinking water supplies from private plumbing systems. Maintaining the current annual testing requirement ensures that this protective barrier remains reliable and that Rhode Island continues to follow the same public health protections implemented throughout New England and neighboring states.

Thank you for your consideration of this testimony and for your continued commitment to protecting Rhode Island's drinking water systems.

Respectfully Submitted,



David L. Simmons P.E.
Executive Director/Chief Engineer