

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 277

(Delegate Ruth, *et al.*)

Environment and Transportation

Education, Energy, and the Environment

Environment - Water Bottle Filling Stations - Requirement

This bill requires, beginning October 1, 2025, with specified exceptions, that at least one “water bottle filling station” or a combined water bottle filling station and drinking fountain must (1) be installed in all new construction at each location where a drinking fountain is required under the current version of the International Plumbing Code (IPC) adopted by the State or State or local law or regulation; (2) be installed in any building undergoing a renovation if the installation of a drinking fountain is required under the current version of IPC adopted by the State or State or local law or regulation; and (3) replace a drinking fountain in an area of a building undergoing a renovation if the renovation includes replacing the drinking fountain. The bill’s requirements apply only prospectively and do not apply to any new construction under contract before the bill’s effective date. The Maryland Department of Labor (MD Labor) must adopt implementing regulations. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2025.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill is not anticipated to significantly affect State expenditures. MD Labor can adopt regulations with existing resources. State revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: The bill is not anticipated to significantly affect local expenditures. Local revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: The bill’s requirement to install at least one water bottle filling station or a combined water bottle filling station and drinking fountain under specified circumstances

does not apply if (1) a drinking fountain in a building located in a commercial or industrial area is replaced and no other renovations are made or (2) a building located in a commercial or industrial area has potable water available through a source other than a drinking fountain, including a kitchen.

“Water bottle filling station” means a plumbing fixture connected to the potable water distribution system and sanitary drainage system that is designed and intended for filling personal use water bottles or containers at least 10 inches in height. It includes (1) a station that is separate from or integral to a drinking fountain and (2) for an interior location of a building, a station that incorporates a water filter and cooling system for chilling the water.

Current Law: A county must enforce the State Plumbing Code or adopt and enforce a local plumbing code that meets or exceeds the minimum standards of the State Plumbing Code for the proper design, acceptable installation, and adequate maintenance of plumbing system. The State Plumbing Code, adopted by the State Board of Plumbing, is the 2018 IPC, although updated code versions are typically incorporated by reference in regulation every few years.

The 2024 IPC specifies the minimum number of drinking fountains required based on building classification and occupancy level. For example, educational facilities and general business facilities require one drinking fountain per 100 occupants. There is also a general minimum requirement of two drinking fountains per facility. Facilities with occupant loads less than 15 are not required to install drinking fountains.

Additional Comments: MD Labor advises that it is unclear if the bill allows the installation of a water dispenser that is *not* connected to a potable distribution system or sanitary drainage system as a reasonable substitute for “water bottle filling stations” as defined in the bill. According to MD Labor, IPC deems water bottle filling systems that are not connected to a potable water distribution system or a sanitary drainage system as acceptable substitutes when a building occupancy load requires three or more drinking fountains to be installed. They are permitted to be substituted for up to 50% of the required number of drinking fountains.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has been introduced within the last three years. See HB 841 of 2024.

Designated Cross File: SB 96 (Senator Brooks) - Education, Energy, and the Environment.

Information Source(s): Harford, Montgomery, Talbot, and Wicomico counties; Baltimore City; cities of College Park and Frostburg; Maryland Municipal League; University System of Maryland; Maryland Department of the Environment; Maryland Department of Labor; Department of Legislative Services

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