

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1615

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Environment & Energy

**Title:** An act relating to increasing consistency in the classifications of water systems.

**Brief Description:** Increasing consistency in the classifications of water systems.

**Sponsors:** Representative Caldier.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Environment & Energy: 2/3/25, 2/11/25 [DP].

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Prohibits using a default number of people served per connection if it would cause a water system to be classified as a Group A system when it would otherwise be considered a Group B system.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT & ENERGY

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 19 members: Representatives Doglio, Chair; Hunt, Vice Chair; Dye, Ranking Minority Member; Klicker, Assistant Ranking Member; Abbarno, Abell, Barnard, Berry, Duerr, Fey, Fitzgibbon, Kloba, Ley, Mena, Ramel, Stearns, Street, Stuebe and Wylie.

**Staff:** Srinandan Ramachandran (786-7291) and Jacob Lipson (786-7196).

**Background:**

A public water system is any system providing water for human consumption, excluding a system serving only one single-family residence, or a system with four or fewer service connections serving residences on the same farm.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

Group A public water systems are public water systems that:

- have 15 or more service connections;
- serve an average of 25 or more people per day for at least 60 days within a calendar year, regardless of the number of service connections; or
- serve 1,000 or more people for two or more consecutive days.

In contrast, Group B public water systems encompass all other public water systems.

The State Board of Health adopts rules, administered by the Office of Drinking Water under the Department of Health (DOH), that pertain to the operations of public water systems.

Local governments are authorized to establish operating permit requirements for public water systems, provided these requirements receive approval from the DOH and lead to an enhanced level of service for the public water system. For Group B public water systems, there is an additional requirement that the local operating permit requirements must be at least as strict as the state regulations.

According to DOH regulations, when calculating the population served to determine whether a system qualifies as a Group A or Group B public water system, the water system operator must assume an average of 2.5 residents per dwelling unit. If a proposed system serves 10 or more dwelling units, it must adhere to the approval standards for Group A systems.

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**Summary of Bill:**

A default number of people per service connection may not be used to determine the number of individuals served by a public water system if doing so would change the system's classification from Group B to Group A.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) On the Key Peninsula, there is a small community of 12 homes that was denied a building permit because its Group B public water system was out of compliance. Even though Group B public water systems have less than 15 service connections and serve fewer than 25 people, since the population served by the connections was estimated to be 2.5

people per dwelling unit, the estimated population served by the water system was calculated to be 25. Thus, the community now faces steep costs to upgrade to a Group A system.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Michelle Caldier, prime sponsor; and Jack Dunne, South Head Water Association.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.