

# *Residents of U.S. City May Lose Access to Water for Not Paying Bills*

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Baltimore, April 13 (RHC)-- Low-income U.S. residents in Baltimore, Maryland are being threatened with having their water shut off if they fail to pay outstanding bills, a move critics say is a clear violation of human rights. With little notice and no public hearings, more than 25,000 households in Baltimore may suddenly lose their access to water for owing bills of \$250 or more starting this week. The majority of these households are occupied by low income or very poor residents.

City officials blame residents for using water and not paying, causing \$40 million in overdue water bills. Baltimore authorities announced this week that county residents will pay 15 percent more for their water and sewer service starting this summer.

However, the Baltimore Sun found more than a third of the unpaid bills come from about 370 businesses as well as government offices and nonprofits. Critics of the shutdown say the city should target businesses before cracking down on low income residents. Activists say such a move can lead to the spread of diseases, notably among children and that the city shouldn't punish those who can't make ends meet.

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