

**Second Quarterly Report of the Independent Consumer Advocate (ICA)
For the Metropolitan District of Hartford County (MDC)**

April 1, 2025 – June 30, 2025

I. Introduction

This is the second report I am submitting as the ICA intended to summarize my activities in the second quarter of 2025. This quarter I continued to attend meetings of the Commission and various committees of the MDC. I also had the opportunity to tour the Water Pollution Control Facility, the West Hartford Water Filters and Reservoir 6, Goodwin Dam and the Goodwin Dam Hydroelectric Powerhouse, Saville Dam and Nepaug Dam. I would like to extend my gratitude to Tom Tyler, Lindsay Strole and Ray Baral who took time to show me these facilities and to explain the infrastructure and challenges facing MDC.

II. Policies

As stated in my first quarterly report I believe that clear written policies, ideally published on the MDC website, would be a great benefit to consumers in several areas. I am continuing to work with MDC on these policies as issues arise.

a. Private Property Damage Policy

The Private Property Damage Policy is MDC's written policy statement regarding payment for damage to private property. It provides separate analysis for damage resulting from a sewer backup or surcharge as opposed to a water main break. In my first quarterly report I noted that the existing policy stated that "when a water main break occurs without any warning, it is the MDC policy to pay for the cost of remediation... for property damaged by a water main break. As part of the remediation, the MDC makes the home habitable...."

My request to the MDC was such that this policy should be revised to address commercial consumer interests where the "make habitable" standard does not apply. Since the time of that report I have received a revised version of the Private Property Damage Policy from the MDC which incorporates these concerns. The section referenced now includes language that MDC will complete such remediation as makes the home habitable or allows the business to operate. I think this is a positive change for consumers.

b. Leak Adjustment Policy

While leak adjustments continue to be a prevalent concern among consumers, MDC does not have a formal written leak adjustment policy comparable to the Private

Property Damage Policy. I stated this concern in my first quarter report and have since raised this concern to MDC staff as well as various commissioners and hope to make some progress on this in the next quarter.

c. Authorization to Perform Work on Private Property Release of Claims

A concern was brought to me this quarter regarding language in MDC's Authorization to Perform Work on Private Property. Specifically, the concern addressed whether the liability waiver is too extensive to appropriately protect consumers.

I reviewed the contract language and raised some concerns. In the following quarter I plan to work together with MDC to hopefully revise this language to be more consumer friendly.

III. Community Partnership Opportunities

a. Operation Fuel

This quarter I had an opportunity to meet with the team at Operation Fuel including Gannon Long, Mike Turaj and Brittany Bergstrom. We discussed their program and goals as well as their budgetary challenges in meeting the needs of the community. I also had the opportunity to review Operation Fuel's program outlines and presentation materials to the MDC as well as the recent resolution from the Water Bureau.

I then met with MDC Staff including Jessica Fenner, Kelly Shane and John Mirtle to discuss Operation Fuel as well as some of the details relating to MDC customers facing payment plans, receiverships and shut offs.

I have since communicated with some commissioners on this issue. It does appear that there may be additional need for assistance funds for some MDC customers. I intend to work together with the commissioners and MDC staff to identify opportunities to address this need over the following quarter.

b. Rebuild Hartford Together

As I noted in my first quarterly report it came to my attention that there are a number of homes where MDC has been unable to proceed with remediation work as a result of extenuating circumstances. I suggested at the First Quarterly Consent Order meeting that MDC might continue to work with community partners in Hartford to see if together they might bridge this gap.

This quarter MDC Utility Services compiled information for my review regarding the types of reasons that a property would not qualify for the Sewer Backup Prevention

program as well as statistics regarding what number of properties were not qualified or otherwise choose not to participate in the program. I then met with Len Turpin and Dawn Whalen of Rebuilding Hartford Together. We discussed their program and identified areas of overlap where Rebuild Hartford Together might be able to provide assistance to certain Hartford customers to bring them within the qualifications for the Sewer Backup Prevention program. Rebuild Hartford Together is eager to collaborate with MDC on a project. I hope to see this relationship get cemented over the remainder of the year.

IV. Individual Consumer Complaints

I again received inquiries by phone or email from over 20 consumers this quarter. These complaints were wide-ranging and covered issues from water damage to properties as a result of work in the street to the lack of sufficient trash bins in the West Hartford Reservoir. I received several calls this quarter regarding various shutoff situations and this was largely the impetus for my interest in learning more about Operation Fuel. Additionally, more recently I have received some complaints regarding meter pits. I intend to spend some time and energy learning about the meter pit program and its impact on consumers in the quarter ahead.

V. Conclusion

As I continue to learn more about MDC's operations and ongoing projects I plan to continue to build on my goal of transparency in getting clear and appropriate policies published regarding major issues facing consumers and will continue to work together with MDC to build community partnerships to assist with their most vulnerable consumers.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Tavelli
Independent Consumer Advocate
Metropolitan District of Hartford
independentconsumeradvocatemdc@gmail.com
860-785-5578