

HOUSE BILL 1509

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CF 4r3472

By: **Delegate Stein**

Introduced and read first time: February 21, 2024

Assigned to: Rules and Executive Nominations

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Baltimore Regional Water Governance Model Workgroup – Established**

3 FOR the purpose of establishing the Baltimore Regional Water Governance Model
4 Workgroup to study the regional water governance approach in the Baltimore region;
5 and generally relating to the Baltimore Regional Water Governance Model
6 Workgroup.

7 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
8 That:

9 (a) There is a Baltimore Regional Water Governance Model Workgroup.

10 (b) (1) The Workgroup consists of the following members:

11 (i) one member of the Senate of Maryland, appointed by the
12 President of the Senate;

13 (ii) one member of the House of Delegates, appointed by the Speaker
14 of the House;

15 (iii) two members appointed by the Governor;

16 (iv) five members appointed by the Mayor of Baltimore City;

17 (v) three members appointed by the County Executive of Baltimore
18 County; and

19 (vi) one member from either Anne Arundel County, Carroll County,
20 Howard County, or Harford County, appointed by the Chair of the Baltimore Metropolitan
21 Council.

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 (2) Each member shall:

2 (i) have knowledge of:

3 1. water resources management and protection;

4 2. the management and operation of water or wastewater
5 systems or comparable expertise;

6 3. environmental finance;

7 4. human resources management; or

8 5. environmental justice and equity; or

9 (ii) represent ratepayers in their respective jurisdictions.

10 (c) The Mayor of Baltimore City and the County Executive of Baltimore County
11 shall jointly designate a chair of the Workgroup.

12 (d) The Mayor of Baltimore City and the County Executive of Baltimore County
13 shall jointly provide staff for the Workgroup.

14 (e) A member of the Workgroup:

15 (1) may not receive compensation as a member of the Workgroup; but

16 (2) is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard State
17 Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.

18 (f) (1) The Workgroup shall strive for consensus among its members.

19 (2) An affirmative vote of 10 members is needed for the Workgroup to act.

20 (g) The Workgroup shall:

21 (1) review the report of the Baltimore Regional Water Governance Task
22 Force submitted in accordance with Chapter 179 of the Acts of the General Assembly of
23 2023;

24 (2) analyze the issues relevant to implementing a regional water
25 governance model in the Baltimore region, including:

26 (i) 1. developing an equity analysis to analyze how the shift to
27 a regional water governance model affects vulnerable residents in the area; and

1 2. recommending programs to assist potentially affected
2 residents during the implementation;

3 (ii) developing a financial transition plan to analyze how
4 implementing a regional water governance model affects the finances of each jurisdiction
5 within the governance area, including pension and benefit commitments and debt service;

6 (iii) assessing the available workforce for a regional water
7 governance model, including hiring new employees and transitioning existing employees
8 from Baltimore City and applicable counties to a regional water governance model;

9 (iv) reviewing any legal and legislative actions required for
10 transitioning to a regional water governance model, including analyzing changes needed to
11 the applicable city and county codes and charters; and

12 (v) assessing the administrative and operational changes required
13 for implementing a regional water governance model, including whether stormwater
14 management would fall under the purview of a regional water governance model;

15 (3) analyze whether creating a City–County Rate Board is necessary to:

16 (i) ensure fairness for consumers; and

17 (ii) balance city and county rates; and

18 (4) review the regional governance models recommended in the report of
19 the Baltimore Regional Water Governance Task Force submitted in accordance with
20 Chapter 179 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2023 and other existing and potential
21 regional water and wastewater governance models to assess how different regional
22 approaches may improve:

23 (i) management;

24 (ii) operations;

25 (iii) employee recruitment;

26 (iv) retention and training;

27 (v) billing and collections;

28 (vi) planning for capital improvements;

29 (vii) emergency management; and

30 (viii) rate stability for customers.

1 (h) (1) The Workgroup shall hire independent consultants to facilitate the
2 requirements of subsection (g) of this section, including:

3 (i) outside counsel to assist with the analysis of issues related to
4 regional governance; and

5 (ii) experts in equity analysis.

6 (2) For fiscal year 2026, the Governor shall include in the annual budget
7 bill an appropriation of \$500,000 for the purpose of hiring independent consultants under
8 paragraph (1) of this subsection.

9 (i) On or before June 30, 2027, the Workgroup shall report its findings to the
10 Mayor of Baltimore City, the County Executive of Baltimore County, the Governor, and, in
11 accordance with § 2–1257 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly.

12 (j) In developing the report required under subsection (i) of this section, the
13 Workgroup shall consult with the Office of the Attorney General.

14 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July
15 1, 2024. It shall remain effective for a period of 3 years and, at the end of June 30, 2027,
16 this Act, with no further action required by the General Assembly, shall be abrogated and
17 of no further force and effect.