

HOUSE BILL 1509

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CF SB 1174

By: ~~Delegate Stein~~ **Delegates Stein, Allen, Guyton, and Ruth**

Introduced and read first time: February 21, 2024

Assigned to: Rules and Executive Nominations

Re-referred to: Environment and Transportation, February 26, 2024

Committee Report: Favorable with amendments

House action: Adopted

Read second time: March 18, 2024

CHAPTER _____

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 including:

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.



1 1. one member who represents the current workforce
2 responsible for the operation and maintenance of the water distribution system; and

3 2. one member from a labor organization that is the exclusive
4 representative for Baltimore City employees;

5 (v) three members appointed by the County Executive of Baltimore
6 County; and

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

10 (2) Each member shall:

11 (i) have knowledge of:

12 1. water resources management and protection;

13 2. the management and operation of water or wastewater
14 systems or comparable expertise;

15 3. environmental finance;

16 4. human resources management; or

17 5. environmental justice and equity; or

18 (ii) represent ratepayers in their respective jurisdictions.

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

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

23 (e) A member of the Workgroup:

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

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

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

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

1 (g) The Workgroup shall:

2 (1) review the report of the Baltimore Regional Water Governance Task
3 Force submitted in accordance with Chapter 179 of the Acts of the General Assembly of
4 2023;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

24 (i) ensure fairness for consumers; and

25 (ii) balance city and county rates; and

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

31 (i) management;

32 (ii) operations;

- 1 (iii) employee recruitment;
- 2 (iv) retention and training;
- 3 (v) billing and collections;
- 4 (vi) planning for capital improvements;
- 5 (vii) emergency management; and
- 6 (viii) rate stability for customers.

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

- 9 (i) outside counsel to assist with the analysis of issues related to
10 regional governance; and
- 11 (ii) experts in equity analysis.

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

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

18 (j) In developing the report required under subsection (i) of this section, the
19 Workgroup:

20 (1) shall consult with the Office of the Attorney General and the
21 Department of the Environment; and

22 (2) may not consider or make recommendations related to a privately
23 operated regional water governance model.

24 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July
25 1, 2024. It shall remain effective for a period of 3 years and, at the end of June 30, 2027,
26 this Act, with no further action required by the General Assembly, shall be abrogated and
27 of no further force and effect.