

Maryland Senate, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
Senator Brian J. Feldman, Chair
SB 880
March 15, 2023

TESTIMONY OF MICHAEL S. MYERS
Member, Back River Neck Peninsula Community Association, Inc.

Good afternoon Chairman Feldman and members of the Committee. My name is Mike Myers and I am a member of the Back River Neck Peninsula Community Association. My home is on the shore of Back River where I have resided for the last 10 years.

I am here to testify in favor with amendments.

1. First, I would like to see the Task Force provided with the expressed authority to obtain a full independent financial audit of the water and wastewater utilities in Baltimore City and Baltimore County. The 2021 Water/Sewer Comprehensive business review indicated that it has some financial information but more financial data is needed. For example, the 2021 review indicates that in Baltimore City, there were 110,000 of 196,000 accounts in Baltimore City are delinquent. This raises the question of whether the system is insolvent, and how the system is funded.
2. Second, I would like to see a modification of Section 1, Paragraph (i) to require that all reports created by the Task Force be made available to the general public. As currently written, the report is to be provided only to the Mayor of Baltimore City, the County Executive of Baltimore County, and to the General Assembly.
3. Third, Paragraph 1, Section (g)(3) currently requires the task force to assesses the governance structures for the Baltimore metro area's water and wastewater utility. I would suggest an even broader scope of the Task Force by going further and examining a potential

merger of the 2 million customers of WSSC with the 1.8 million customers of the Baltimore metro area into a large Washington Baltimore Commission with 3.8 million total customers. There may be economies of scale that can be passed down to ratepayers across the region, and other benefits, of such an entity. I think it's worth some examination.

4. And finally, my fourth suggestion is a modification of Section 1, Paragraph (b)(1) concerning membership on the Committee. As the bill stands, Baltimore City Mayor is allocated 5 members to sit on the Task Force while Baltimore County is allocated only 3. According to 2020 census data, Baltimore County has about 850,000 people compared to Baltimore City's 576,000. Also, according to the 2021 Water/Sewer Comprehensive Business Process Review, Baltimore County has 206,000 water accounts compared to Baltimore City's 194,000. The current ratio does not properly represent stakeholders affected by the legislation. An equal number of County and City members would be more aligned with the goals of Environmental Justice. Those goals are fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people with respect to development and implementation of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

I hope the committee will consider my suggestions. Thank you.