



# METROPOLITAN BALTIMORE COUNCIL

## AFL-CIO Unions

### **SB 880 - Baltimore Regional Water Governance Task Force Education, Energy, & the Environment Committee March 15, 2023**

#### **Support with Amendments**

To: Hon. Brian Feldman, Chair & members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

From: Courtney Jenkins, President, Metropolitan Baltimore AFL-CIO

Chairman and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in **support with amendments** for *SB 880-Baltimore Regional Water Governance Task Force*. My name is Courtney Jenkins, President of the Metropolitan Baltimore Council AFL-CIO—our central labor council coalition represents over 100 affiliated local unions and close to 80,000 proud union members in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Cecil, Harford, and Howard counties, and Baltimore City.

The Metropolitan Baltimore AFL-CIO supports a bill that creates a task force to study our regional water and wastewater governance. To ensure that all stakeholders are included in the task force, representation from employee organizations within organized labor that represent workers of the system is imperative; and can only be achieved by amending this legislation to include representation from organized labor.

The task force is charged with assessing how different regional approaches could potentially improve elements of the system including operations and employee recruitment, retention, and training.

In the 2021 Water/Sewer Services Comprehensive Business Review, the executive summary report notes opportunities to strengthen the existing organizational structure. All characteristics including staffing, succession planning, knowledge capture, and salary study impact the dedicated and knowledgeable workers within the system. The report goes on to note that when leadership was surveyed they responded by prioritizing “Modification as to how the HR, procurement and training support functions work with operations staff ; Increased staffing and opportunities for employees to grow in their careers; Facilitated strategic planning sessions



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at the department level; and Adjustments to salaries to make them competitive with that of other utilities and private firms.”

These recommendations and the work of the task force make it clear that the voice of organized labor is justified and necessary.

Further, the task force is charged with analyzing the fiscal implications of alternative governance structures including areas related to staffing and pension liabilities. These charges directly impact the working people that help maintain and operate the water and wastewater system. As much of the task force’s work will rely upon the knowledge and expertise of water and wastewater— we view the inclusion of organized labor’s representation within the group as both appropriate and necessary for a fully comprehensive report.

For these reasons, **we support SB 880 with the following amendment:**

*Add the following language to Page 3, Line 8, moving all subsequent language down:*

*(vii) two members representing water and wastewater workers, appointed by the Maryland State & DC AFL-CIO.*

Respectfully,

*Courtney L. Jenkins*

Courtney L. Jenkins, President