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SB880-Baltimore Regional Water Governance Task Force
Education, Energy and Environment
March 15th, 2023
Favorable with Amendment

Good afternoon, Chair Feldman and Vic-Chair Kagan and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee. Thank you for the opportunity for AFSCME to submit testimony in favor with amendments on SB880 the Baltimore Regional Water and Governance Task Force bill. The purpose of this bill is to establish the Baltimore Regional Water Governance Task Force to study approaches to water and wastewater governance in the Baltimore region, and generally relating to water supply and wastewater treatment in the Baltimore region. This bill will also be discussing they system’s operation, employe recruitment and retention which is why we need labor represented on the task force.

The future of the Baltimore Water System is important not only to the residents, but also to those workers who work for BPW. AFSCME local 44 in Baltimore City and Local 921 represent public employees in local government and specifically working on the water system. As we move forward with this creation of a task force to study the future of our water system, our members (AFSCME) have a vested interested in being a part of the conversation of its future and its employees. We believe that our members’ expertise and experiences would be invaluable to the task force as discussions concerning employee recruitment and retention, training, and operations are being proposed.

Around the country, labor unions have participated on task forces to lend a worker’s prospective on many issues. We believe that labor’s voice, with is missing from SB880, not only add value to the task force, but strengthens it. Labor union members not only work in Baltimore City and County but are residents who reside this these localities and have a vested interest in building a stronger water system in the region.

We are asking for the following amendment:

Add the following language to Page 3, Line 9, moving all subsequent language down:

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

Baltimore City and Baltimore County will be engaging important conversations concerning their water system to identify strengths and weaknesses of the current governance, planning, data management, and operations of the water and wastewater utilities, to identify opportunities to improve the system and labor should be a part of that discussion. We are asking the committee for your help in achieving that.

We thank the committee for your time, and we respectfully ask for a favor report with the proposed amendment on SB880.

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO

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