



## **Randallstown**

**P.O. Box 731 Randallstown, MD 21133**

March 14, 2023

Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
2 West  
Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: SUPPORT SB 0880-Baltimore Regional Water Governance Task Force**

Dear Chair Feldman, VC Kagan and Committee Members:

The Randallstown NAACP is based in Baltimore County with a membership of 500 individuals throughout the region. May it be known the mission of the Randallstown NAACP is to secure equal rights in order to eliminate race-based discrimination and ensure the health and wellbeing of all persons in Baltimore County and the State of Maryland.

On or around September 03, 2022, (Sat), during a routine test, the Department of Public Works 18 discovered positive results for E. coli in the water distribution system at Baltimore City Fire 19 Department Engine #8, located at 1503 West Lafayette Avenue

On September 4, 2022, (Sun), the second positive test came back positive for E. coli. Yosef Kebede, DPW's bureau chief for water and wastewater, sent an email at 11:35 a.m. to other DPW staffers relaying the positive test information. By noon, Kebede told other DPW staff, including DPW Director Jason Mitchell, that MDE had been notified of the positive test and there was "a possible need to issue [an] advisory to the public."

Greg Busch, water supply Mgr MDE stated on September 4, (Sun) at 8:30pm email, "To reiterate what we discussed during our 6:30 conversation, Baltimore City needs to issue a boil water advisory this evening," Busch wrote in his email reminder the city of the federal requirement to notify the public within 24 hours of a Tier 1 violation, per the Safe Drinking Water Act. The E. coli contamination would have fallen under a Tier 1 violation. A BWA did not go out to the public Sunday, despite multiple reminders from MDE.

On September 5, 2022 ( Mon) At 7:43 a.m., DPW posted a notification on the neighborhood website Nextdoor and a thread on Twitter. The notice, however, did not include a boil water advisory requiring people in the impacted area to boil their water, rather the notice said "residents may want to consider boiling any water used from faucets." DPW did not release the correct information to boil all water until approx 5pm, on September 5, 2022.

### **Safe Drinking Water Act, § 141.201 General public notification requirements.**

The Act states that "E Coli is a tier 1 violation and the public must be notified within 24 hours. Water suppliers must use media outlets such as television, radio, and newspapers, post their notice in public places, personally deliver a notice to their customers, or an alternative method approved by the primacy agency." The EPA also has a sample template:

[https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-02/documents/pn\\_e\\_coli\\_boil\\_advisory.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-02/documents/pn_e_coli_boil_advisory.pdf)

### **The Baltimore City Council has questions**

"Everyone was kept in the dark," said Councilman Isaac Yitzy Schleifer who represents District 5. "The big danger is that come Monday, you had babies' formula being mixed with E-coli water..you had seniors who were taking their medicine with E-coli water," he added. "I do believe that things could've been done better. I know we got information later in the game, right, in terms of late Sunday night into Monday morning," said Councilman John Bullock of District 9 where the contamination was concentrated. "(There's) a lot of frustration all around," said Councilman Eric Costello of District 11. "I think a lot of it was the department of public works as well as the Mayor's Office in terms of that unclear and inconsistent communication of the contamination of fact. I will say that as time went on, things did improve," said Costello.

### **Baltimore County Residents**

The residents in Baltimore County were left in the dark because of the miscommunication from Baltimore City's Department of Public Works. The nearly 900,000 residents of Baltimore County do not have full voting representation, (cannot vote on the mayor or the Director of DPW) even though they are American citizens, and pay county taxes. This lack of political representation for Baltimore County residents — which has more people than Baltimore City— is the reason the oversight of Baltimore's water system disenfranchises and underrepresents county residents. This bill will allow for a path forward in the governance of the region's water system.

It is clear DPW and the City of Baltimore clearly violated § 141.201. Even more egregious is it appears the city is incompetent or has intentionally misled the public. The City of Baltimore can not be allowed to control the water supply that reaches residents in Baltimore, Howard, Harford, Anne Arundel and Harford counties. Clean drinking water is a civil rights issue and all residents of Maryland should have clean drinking water.

**The Randallstown Branch of the NAACP urges a favorable report from the committee on SB 0880.**

Best,

Ryan Coleman  
Randallstown NAACP, President