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MAYOR

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HB624

March 30, 2023

TO: Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
FROM: Nina Themelis, Interim Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations
RE: House Bill 624 – Environment – Suppliers of Water – Notification Requirement
POSITION: OPPOSE

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **opposes** House Bill (HB) 624.

HB 624 would alter the means by which a supplier of water must give notice to the Department of the Environment (MDE) and certain individuals and entities under certain circumstances; require that a supplier of water use a certain minimum number of means to give the notice; require a supplier of water to give notice to MDE and the Maryland Department of Emergency Management (MDEM) if there is a positive test for E. coli in the system; require MDE and MDEM to immediately begin certain preparations on receipt of a notice of a positive test for E. coli in a public water system; and generally relating to public water systems and suppliers of water.

The City of Baltimore's water system is a regional supplier of drinking water to more than 1.8 million customers in Baltimore City and the surrounding region. Baltimore, Carroll, Howard, and Harford counties are all customers of the City's system. Baltimore County receives potable water from the City's system and these customers are billed directly by the City for their usage. Carroll County is a wholesale purchaser of raw water that they withdraw from the City's Liberty Reservoir, which they treat and distribute to their customers in the Freedom District. Howard County is a wholesale purchaser of the City's potable water that they distribute and bill directly to a portion of their residents. Harford County is a wholesale purchaser of raw water.

The City performs routine testing of the water distribution system to monitor the amount of chlorine residual in the distributed water and to test for the potential presence of bacterium. These tests are performed at 90 sampling points in the City and County. This sampling is in addition to the multiple daily and hourly testing performed at the filtration plants before the treated water enters the distribution system. Under the "Revised Total Coliform Rule" (RTCR), a water utility is required to notify MDE if there is a positive test for E. coli for a water sample taken within the distribution system. The test samples are required to "sit" for 24 hours to determine if there is any indication of bacterium growth. If the test is positive, MDE is notified. In addition, a second confirmation test is taken, the sample sits for 24 hours, and if the E. coli presence is confirmed, the City MUST notify MDE within 24 hours and a series of actions are taken to flush the system.

The water utility also notifies Baltimore City's Office of Emergency Management (OEM) whose staff coordinates the event with all City agencies and any affected county and State partners, including MDE. MDE, working with the City, defines the impacted area based on the City's sampling and testing data, and approves all public messaging before it can be released. Notification of affected customers is tailored to each event, and multiple means are used, including door-to-door outreach, social media, traditional media outlets, etc.

For the above reasons, the BCA respectfully requests an unfavorable report on HB 624.