



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

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HB 843

March 1, 2023

TO: Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee
FROM: Brandon M. Scott, Mayor, City of Baltimore
RE: House Bill 843 - Baltimore Regional Water Governance Task Force
POSITION: Support

Chair Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and Members of the Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) supports for House Bill (HB) 843.

HB 843 seeks to establish a task force which will be responsible for reviewing the organizational structure and governance models as outlined in the 2021 Water/Sewer Services Comprehensive Business Process Review for Baltimore City and Baltimore County as well as additional water and wastewater governance models to assess various regional approaches and make a recommendation as to which model may be best for the Baltimore Region.

I have worked with my Administration and County Executive Johnny Olszewski to develop the framework for this task force which will allow for an efficient, effective, and expeditious review to take place. HB 843 includes membership from Baltimore City, Baltimore County, members appointed by Governor Wes Moore, one member of the House of Delegates, one member of the Senate of Maryland, and one member representing the additional jurisdictions who use the water and wastewater systems of Baltimore City.

Baltimore City's water system was first established in the mid-19th century when the City had around 250,000 residents and has since undergone a vast expansion to provide service to nearly 1.8 million residential and business consumers across Baltimore City and 5 surrounding jurisdictions today

Today's utility includes three reservoirs containing 86 billion gallons of water, three water treatment plants, two wastewater treatment plants, and multiple pumping stations to serve the growing needs of the Baltimore region.

These treatment plants combined produce 360 million gallons of drinking water each day. Our wastewater treatment plants collect and treat an average flow of 200 million gallons of wastewater daily through a complex system of 3,100 miles of sanitary mains

We have been proud to diligently serve as the Baltimore region's water supplier for all of these years, but we are at a pivotal moment in history where we need to determine what the future needs of our region will look like and how to best address those needs through the utility.

Cities across the nation, and countries across the world are facing the harsh reality of the need and to ensure clean drinking water for future generations. Data from the US Census Bureau also makes clear that Black and Brown communities are those most disproportionately affected by water access issues.

Due to these historic and ongoing inequities, it is essential that we ensure that our services are efficient, equitable, and sustainable for every customer throughout the entirety of the system. We need to ensure that those who have the greatest responsibility for the utility are the ones engaged in performing the work. We need to ensure that the voices of those most vulnerable to the effects of climate change and the ongoing water crisis are heard.

The Task Force will not only review various governance models for their own merit, but will be responsible for determining which governance model would be best suited for OUR utility. Baltimore's water and wastewater utility, like any utility, has its own unique circumstances, so we must not just try and provide a cookie cutter solution to a complex problem.

For these reasons, I request a **favorable** report on HB 843.