



*A Union of Professionals*  
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**Written Testimony Submitted to the  
Maryland House of Delegates Energy and Transportation Committee  
HB 843 – Baltimore Regional Water Governance Taskforce  
March 1, 2023**

**Favorable-with-amendments**

Chair Barve and members of the Committee, on behalf of the American Federation of Teachers - Maryland (AFT-MD), representing more than 20,000 members including those in the City Union of Baltimore (CUB) and the Baltimore County Federation of Public Employees (BCFPE), which represent the city and county employees in their respective water departments, we call for a favorable-with-amendments report for HB 843.

CUB's and BCFPE's amendments – drafted with with our coalition partners in Food and Water Watch, include the following, a taskforce membership to ensure employee and community voices are included in discussions; insurances that the water utility system will not be privatized; the protections the people of Baltimore have placed to safeguard their water system are respected; and an adjustment to the report timeline to allow these substantial issues to be studied in depth.

Water, a fundamental human right, must be fairly and equitably distributed to residents. Proposed changes to the system must have input from the community and include voices of those who are engaged in the day-to-day operations of the delivery and upkeep of our city's water system. The amendments to the taskforce membership portion of the bill call for the mayor and the county executive to appoint at least one representative each from the union of county and city employees currently working for the water systems. In addition, the amendment calls for the Governor to appoint members that represent low-income water rate payers, as water affordability has been at the forefront of issues over the past decade.

Finally, we call for an adjustment to the deadline for the taskforce to submit its report and recommendations to the general assembly; nine months is simply just not enough time to effectively study this issue.

We ask that the committee adopt these amendments and issue a favorable-with-amendments report to HB 843. Thank you.

