



City Union of Baltimore

Local 800, AFT, AFL-CIO

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**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland House Environment and Transportation Committee
Antoinette Ryan-Johnson, President, City Union of Baltimore, AFT Local 800
HB 1509 – Baltimore Regional Water Governance Model Workgroup
March 12, 2024**

FAVORABLE-WITH-AMENDMENTS

Good afternoon Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee. My name is Antoinette Ryan-Johnson, and I am the President of the City Union of Baltimore, a union for Baltimore City employees, including almost 400 city employees working in the city's water and wastewater department. We call for a favorable-with-amendments report for HB 1509, the bill that would create a workgroup to study the potential to create a regional water utility for Baltimore City and County. We have appended the proposed amendments to our written testimony for your review.

The City Union of Baltimore represents city workers who work in the water and wastewater systems for Baltimore city, our members perform many duties for the City including supervising the operations and employees of the fresh water and wastewater plants, testing and treating fresh water to ensure it is safe for human consumption, testing and treating waste water to ensure it is environmentally safe and free of harmful contaminants. Other employees supervise and maintain the billing system in Baltimore City, generating revenue for the City. While others maintain the residential and commercial meter systems as well as the maintaining the above ground and underground utilities of the water system. These members not only have particular, valuable, front-line insights on the strengths and weaknesses of the current system, but also have a right to participate in larger conversations over decisions that may impact their work. Their representation on this workgroup is a must.

Members of the committee, the proposed work of this workgroup must not be understated: the undertaking of a monumental task to re-envision how water, a fundamental human right, is fairly and equitably distributed to residents in both our city and Baltimore County, must not be taken lightly. This task must have ample input from the community members most impacted by

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decisions being made, 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. Our 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 City and County employees currently working for the water systems. In addition, the amendment calls for the Governor to appoint members to the taskforce that represent low-income water rate payers, as water affordability issues have been at the forefront of conversations regarding City and County water over the past decade.

Again, we call for a favorable-with-amendments report on HB 1509. Thank you.

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