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**Written Testimony Submitted to the
Maryland Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
SB 461
Environment – Maryland Water Quality Revolving Loan Fund –
Renaming and Alternations
February 11, 2025
SUPPORT**

Good afternoon Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee. My name is Antoinette Ryan-Johnson, and I am the President of the City Union of Baltimore, AFT Local 800. Our union represents hundreds of employees working for the Baltimore City Water Department, and in this capacity, we are calling for a favorable report to SB 461.

As many of you may have heard, Baltimore City Water, which serves not only the residents of our city, but also Baltimore County and portions of Howard, Anne Arundel and Carroll County, has had a number of challenges and difficulties over the last few years. We are acutely aware of these problems, as one of our union members died on the job at a water treatment facility in 2019. During the process of reviewing the water system in the city, we found that the main driver to these challenges is the system is underfunded given the size of the community it serves. Additionally, our partners at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund found that the way our state scores water infrastructure projects puts communities like Baltimore City and Prince George's County at an unfair disadvantage.

SB 461 is an attempt to rectify this injustice. It would change the way these projects are scored so as minority and underserved communities would receive a more fair share of state and federal dollars to keep on vital infrastructure like water. But additionally, such a revision of the way these projects are scored will help the region and environment, giving City DPW Water the ability to recruit and retain high-quality staff so that major malfunctions that cause things like untreated water to be dropped into our waterways can cease, and so that our water infrastructure facilities can get the necessary people in place to make sure the system works for our entire region. For these reasons, we call on a favorable report to SB 461. Thank you.