

April 26, 2023

Honorable Governor Wes Moore
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Honorable Senate President Bill Ferguson
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Honorable Speaker Adrienne Jones
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Honorable Mayor Brandon Scott
250 City Hall, 100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Honorable County Executive Johnny
Olszewski
400 Washington Avenue
Towson, Maryland 21204

Honorable BMC Chair and County Executive
Calvin Ball III
3430 Court House Drive
Ellicott City, MD 21043

Dear Honorable Governor Wes Moore, Senate President Bill Ferguson, Speaker Adrienne Jones, Mayor Brandon Scott, County Executive Johnny Olszewski, and BMC Chair and County Executive Calvin Ball III,

In April 2023, the Maryland State legislature passed HB-843/SB-880, which created a Baltimore Regional Water Governance Task Force (Task Force) charged with recommending a new governance model for the Baltimore water and sewer system with the purpose of informing potential state legislation on the issue. While we support efforts to improve Baltimore residents' access to safe, affordable, and reliable water and wastewater treatment, we are concerned that the proposed Task Force will not address the systemic problems, including the lack of funding, that have plagued Baltimore's water and sewer systems.

As the legislation empowers you to select the members of the Task Force, we ask for you to select individuals who represent low-income ratepayers and union workers. These critical groups should have a seat at the table to ensure that those most vulnerable to changes in a governance structure will have a direct voice in considerations which will impact their future. We believe that having directly impacted people like low-income ratepayers, local community organizations which represent ratepayers, and representatives of union workers on the Task Force will create the best result for the City, County, and other affected jurisdictions.

We also believe that in order for the Task Force to protect residents' access to safe, affordable water, you should appoint task force members who will prioritize the following:

- 1. Conduct a racial equity impact assessment and an economic equity impact assessment.**
- 2. Include multiple public hearings and a public comment process that is open and accessible.**
- 3. Limit its study to public sector solutions that will exclude private for-profit ownership or operation, protect democratic decision-making and the rights of workers and residents, and not undermine or conflict with existing local water**

affordability laws, sewage backup assistance programs, and charter protections already approved by voters; and

- 4. Recommend an expanded timeline that will allow for necessary reviews, including a proper economic and racial equity analysis regarding the impact of changing the governance of the system.**

Solving the problems confronting the Baltimore region's water and sewer system requires thoughtful analysis that examines multiple alternatives and weighs the various costs and benefits. Issues such as racial equity, the fiscal health of Baltimore City and Baltimore County, water affordability, and the environment must be thoroughly considered and addressed. Please appoint affected low-income ratepayers and union representatives to the task force and direct your appointees to follow the above principles.

Sincerely,

AFT-Maryland

Blue Water Baltimore

Chapman Forest Foundation

Chesapeake Legal Alliance

Clean Water Action

Community Development Clinic, University of Baltimore School of Law

Doctors for Camp Closure

Food & Water Watch

Friends of Swann Park

Glen Echo Heights Mobilization

Gwynns Falls Community Association

Jews United for Justice

Maryland Legislative Coalition

Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service

NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (LDF)

Our Revolution Maryland

Progressive Maryland

SANIPLAN

St. Mary's River Watershed Association

The 6th Branch

www.HoCoClimateAction.org