

A Council Resolution concerning

Informational Hearing - Implementation of the “Water4All” Program and the Water Accountability and Equity Act

For the purpose of requesting representatives from the Department of Public Works, the Department of Finance, and the Office of the Baltimore City Administrator to inform the Baltimore City Council on the implementation of the Water-for-All Discount Program and the Water Accountability and Equity Act.

Recitals

Knowing that water is a human right, the City Council passed Council Bill 18-0307 the Water Accountability and Equity Act (the “WAEA”) which was enacted on January 13, 2020, with a modification bill 20-0626 enacted on December 7, 2020.

Established under the WAEA, the Water-for-All Discount Program (the “Water4All Program”) was intended to replace the BH2O water assistance program - for the purpose of increasing the affordability of basic water and wastewater service to those customers who need it most, and include renters who have traditionally not been eligible for water discounts. The Water4All Program was to be implemented by the Department of Public Works (“DPW”) on July 1, 2021. As of the introduction of this resolution, the Water4All Program is still not implemented. In addition, residents who previously received water discounts under the BH2O program now go without any assistance because DPW stopped the BH2O program in July 2021. While DPW has collected “statements of intent” from residents to apply for the Water4All Program, these residents have not received any relief from their water bills. It is the intent of the Baltimore City Council that residents receive retroactive credits for this delay.

It is also the intent of the Baltimore City Council to ensure that enrollment goals are met, and DPW should update the Council on meeting those goals.

In addition, established by the WAEA, the Office of Water-Customer Advocacy and Appeals has not been implemented. While DPW does have a dispute resolution team and staff to address disputed water bills, it has not been deemed the Office of Water-Customer Advocacy and Appeals. We are asking DPW to update the City Council on the status of this office.

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of Baltimore, That the City Council requests that representatives from the Department of Public Works, the Department of Finance, and the Office of the Baltimore City Administrator to inform the Baltimore City Council on implementation of the Water4All program, including when the program will be available for residents, and why there has been a delay in implementation.

And be it further resolved, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the City Solicitor, the Director of the Department of Public Works, the Director of the Department of Finance, the Baltimore City Administrator, and the Mayor’s Legislative Liaison to the City Council.