



CITY OF BALTIMORE
MAYOR BRANDON M. SCOTT

TO	The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council
FROM	Veronica P. McBeth, Director, Department of Transportation
CC	Mayor's Office of Government Relations
DATE	May 29, 2026
SUBJECT	26-0178 • Baltimore Harbor – Transfer of Authority to Department of Transportation

Position: Favorable

BACKGROUND

Council Bill 26-0178 transfers authority over the regulation and management of the Baltimore Harbor from the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to DOT. The legislation modernizes outdated provisions within Article 10 of the Baltimore City Code by removing references to positions, roles, and duties which are no longer used by or applicable to the City. Further, it formally establishes the Harbormaster as a function within the Department while authorizing DOT to oversee Harbor operations, vessel activity, permitting, infrastructure management, and enforcement activities. The bill also establishes and updates certain penalties related to safety, the environment, structures, and obstructions within the Harbor.

The Harbormaster is responsible for the management of docking at Baltimore's municipal piers by setting and collecting docking fees, delivering services to users, and managing wharfage and land-use agreements. The Harbormaster is also tasked with maintaining public access and general fund revenue, consulting on waterfront development, and keeping Harbor infrastructure in a state of good repair. More recently, the Harbormaster's office has coordinated logistics surrounding Sail250 and supported dredging efforts ahead of the event.

This legislation represents the culmination of over a year of work and interagency coordination by the Harbormaster's office. The Department has consulted with City stakeholders (DHCD, Police, Law, Real Estate, Legislative Reference, and MOGR), the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, and the United States Coast Guard. These conversations have shaped the development of Council Bill 26-0178 to ensure the legislation reflects real-world conditions and sets up the Harbor for success.

RECOMMENDATION

Council Bill 26-0178 modernizes Article 10 by bringing City Code in line with the Harbor's

operational reality and removing language which has become obsolete over the years. The bill strengthens DOT's ability to manage docking, infrastructure, and enforcement throughout the Baltimore Harbor. Furthermore, because the Harbormaster's office already operates within the agency's budget, the Department does not anticipate a negative fiscal impact as a result of this legislation. As such, the Department requests a favorable report on Council Bill 26-0178.