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I am Diana Geis. I live in Barre Circle at 734 McHenry Street. I own my home. My house and my basement were affected by a sewer back up the last weekend of June.

Thank you for hosting this hearing. It shows that you are taking this disaster seriously.

I'm not certain when the flood happened, but by Saturday, June 25 there was 8" of backed up sewer water in my basement. I was visiting in Ohio when I received a call from my neighbor to check my basement. I called my son, Tom Geis, who came to my house to remediate the best he could. (I have photos if you'd like to see them?)

He found chaos. Chaos in my basement and in the neighborhood with neighbors outside wondering what to do. 311 was called. Baltimore City DPW (Department of Public Works) arrived to pump out as needed. Tom managed my sump pump as did those neighbors who had them. But some did not. The city and my sump pump dumped a lot of sewer water into the storm drains that lead to the Chesapeake Bay – as did the neighbors' sump pumps and the companies hired to drain basements without sump pumps. It all went in the storm drains. I want to make sure you understand what happened to that sewer water. **The backed up sewer water went into the Chesapeake Bay.**

The aftermath was daunting. I hardly know where to start. Some things were above water level and not damaged. Some things were destroyed and cannot be replaced. Some things were damaged and could be replaced – at a cost, of course.

Immediately, the hot water heater and dehumidifier were a high priority for replacement. The dryer and furnace fan motor were next on the priority list.

Cleaning?? That was a difficult task. It is an unfinished basement with a smooth cement floor. It is used for laundry, workshop and storage. After the water was gone, I could start putting things in contractor bags to take to the dump. I had vintage clothes - family memories dating back over 100 years - that went to the dump. They were in plastic bins, but they had mostly tipped over. I had workshop supplies and tools that had to be scrapped. The camping equipment survived except for the mattress. I took things that were ok to the first floor or backyard while I cleaned. I used a bleach solution to clean the floor and lower 8" of the wall. In the backyard I used a bleach solution to clean things I had taken out there to clean. My energy and time allowed me to clean only a section at a time. But after 2 weeks it had all been cleaned and sanitized - ready to put things back in.

The sewer water came into the basement through the back flow pipe behind my washer. When I moved the washer and dryer out to clean behind and under them, I was scraping dry, used toilet paper and wipes off the dry basement floor. It was an inch thick in some places.

My time? I estimate I spent at least 50 hours cleaning & moving things up and down the stairs.

My time? I also spent many hours calling contractors and arranging my schedule to meet with them to make various decisions on replacement options. And then more time for installations. Maybe another 30 hours, at least (they give you a window of time).

My time? There was also the time spent shopping for replacement items - cleaning supplies, new dryer, shop vac, dehumidifier, and many miscellaneous items.

I am a retired teacher from Ohio. I moved here 10 years ago because my kids and grandkids are here. I have a part time job at the B&O Railroad Museum. I am lucky to have flexible hours, but I had to take off work to manage some of it - including an appointment with Felicia Porter, our Councilperson, and coming here today.

Do I have insurance? Yes, I do. And they paid for mold remediation, new hot water heater, new sump pump (sump pumps aren't designed to pump 'stuff' in sewer water), new blower motor and capacitor for the furnace. I have a \$1000 deductible policy. They have paid about \$3000 to date and there is another \$2000 outstanding - it's not closed - so not sure they will cover the remainder. There are many things they will not replace. And, of course, they cannot replace my time - nor my disgust . . . my frustration . . . my angst (sewer water!!) . . . my worry . . . my energy . . . my mental health.

Fortunately, I did not get sick - neither from germs (I used rubber gloves) nor from bleach odors.

I met with Felicia Porter intent on making sure DPW would fix this issue. I spoke with her about holding DPW responsible for fixing this reoccurring issue that happens in our neighborhood. It's a long term issue - goes back 20 years or so. This happens - never this bad - at least once a year when the 'wipes' clog up the drain that goes under Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. The drain goes between Barre Circle and Ridgley's Delight. When it happens DPW comes out to 'blow' out the pipes. It's all good - for another year or so.

I also asked her about restitution I might be entitled to for my losses. She then told me about a program that would help with sanitizing, but I don't qualify because I have insurance - and that program is for weather related backups. I have an option to seek legal action, but until I see the final settlement with the insurance company, I won't make that decision.

Please consider inserting into your protocol for managing disasters a way to offer financial restitution when a city-responsible disaster occurs - like sewer backups. Yes, the infrastructure is old. The city is old. My house was a \$1 house from the 70's (I paid more than that when I bought it 5 years ago.). The house was built around 1850. It is unacceptable that homeowners and their private insurance have to bear the full burden of damage as a result of deficiencies in City infrastructure and maintenance. This should not be the responsibility of homeowners insurance. Consider a program that honors our time and money for what insurance and your sanitizing program does not cover. Consider a program that takes responsibility for damage caused by failed infrastructure.

To change the tune I would like to take my hat off to Baltimore DPW for their response in helping us with our flooded basements, for clearing the clog in the pipe in a timely manor. For helping all the distressed neighbors - including my son. They were great!! And NOW for recently inserting a smooth 'state of the art' liner in the offending sewer pipe that will make passage of difficult items easier. Thank you. That was installed 2 weeks ago. The slick new surface does not guarantee no clogs. I hope they will also set up a schedule for checking it on a regular basis. This is important. It would also be comforting if they notified the neighborhood when they check it - maybe just make a 3 month schedule - and assure us that it's ok.

Thank you for listening and for taking this issue to heart. Our health, our property values, our financial stability, and our peace of mind are all in your hands.

Does anyone have any questions for me?







