FROM				
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	Agency Name & Address	Health Department 1001 E. Fayette Street Baltimore, Maryland 21201	AGENCY REPORT	
	Subject/ Position:	21-0016R – Investigative Hearing - Building Backups of Untreated Sewage **FAVORABLE**		

To: President and Members
of the City Council
c/o 409 City Hall

March 24, 2021

The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) is pleased to have the opportunity to review Council Bill #21-0016R, entitled, "Investigative Hearing - Building Backups of Untreated Sewage." This resolution seeks a discussion regarding "the effectiveness and sufficiency of measures being taken to address basement backups of raw sewage in the City."

In 2019, BCHD provided a report regarding Council Bill #19-0159R, which addressed an identical concern. This report acknowledged that sewage back-ups can pose hazards to one's health. Since that time, there has been additional concern that the COVID-19 virus may be transmissible through wastewater backing into one's home. Recent evidence suggests that feces can contain the COVID-19 virus, though these virus particles are often thought to be nonviable and exposure risk should be minimal.[1] Regardless, individuals should exercise caution in cleaning after sewage back-ups, as modeled in a flyer BCHD co-created with the Department of Public Works, entitled, "Cleaning Up After a Sewage Back-Up."

Once more, as mentioned in our 19-0159R report, BCHD's Bureau of Environmental Health's Ecology & Institutional Services program does investigate sewage complaints. Often, inspectors will cite property owners who have failed to remediate sewage back-ups on behalf of a property's tenants. It should be reiterated that BCHD is not involved in remediation efforts, which generally fall upon property owners.

To promote additional conversation and transparency regarding the City's approach to sewage back-ups, BCHD urges a **favorable report** for Council Bill #21-0016R.

[1] "Most coronavirus types which attack human (possible for SARS-CoV-2) are often inactivated rapidly in water (i.e., the survival of human coronavirus 229E in water being 7 day at 23 °C). However, the survival period of coronavirus in water environments strongly depends on temperature, property of water, concentration of suspended solids and organic matter, solution pH, and dose of disinfectant used. **The World Health Organization has stated that the current disinfection process of drinking water could effectively inactivate most of the bacterial and viral communities present in water, especially SARS-CoV-2 (more sensitive to disinfectant like free chlorine).**" Tran, H., Le, G., Nguyen, D., Juang, R., Rinklebe, J., Bhatnagar, A., . . . Chao, H. (2021, February). Sars-cov-2 coronavirus in water and wastewater: A critical review about presence and concern. Retrieved March 19, 2021, from https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7528884/