

CITY OF BALTIMORE
COUNCIL BILL 23-0182R
(First Reader)

Introduced by: Councilmembers Ramos, Bullock, Middleton, Burnett, Porter, Cohen

Introduced and read first time: July 17, 2023

Assigned to: Public Safety and Government Operations Committee

REFERRED TO THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES: City Solicitor, City Administrator, Department of Public Works, Mayor's Office of Government Relations, Office of Equity and Civil Rights

A RESOLUTION ENTITLED

1 A COUNCIL RESOLUTION concerning

2 **Informational Hearing – Regional Water Governance Task Force**

3 FOR the purpose of inviting representatives from the Office of the City Administrator, the
4 Director of the Department of Public Works, the Mayor's Office of Government Relations,
5 the Office of Equity and Civil Rights, and any other relevant agencies to report on the topics
6 outlined in this Resolution and provide additional information as needed by the Committee.

7 Baltimore City's water is among the best water in the country. In the 2022 Water Quality
8 Report, Baltimore City's water contaminants are below the United States Environmental
9 Protection Agency's standard, which is excellent. Baltimore's water and sewer system was
10 ahead of its time when developed over 100 years ago. While the water and sewer infrastructure is
11 aging, the quality of Baltimore's water continues to be top notch.

12 Despite Baltimore's exceptional water quality, residents express dismay about the inequities
13 in the system, particularly around water billing. Baltimore residents pay much more than County
14 residents, although Baltimore County subsidizes the costs. There are still issues within the
15 system that need to be addressed.

16 The Baltimore Regional Water Governance Task Force ("Task Force") was created by Senate
17 Bill 880/House Bill 843 of the 2023 Maryland General Assembly. The purpose of the Task
18 Force is to review the relationship between Baltimore City and Baltimore County and other
19 nearby counties, relative to water and sewer services and operations.

20 The Baltimore Regional Water Governance Task Force is a welcome initiative to address the
21 inequities and continue to strengthen the overall system to continue our history of high quality
22 water and improve sewer treatment to protect the Chesapeake Bay.

23 The Task Force is charged with evaluating the recommendations outlined in the 2021
24 Water/Sewer Services Comprehensive Business Process Review study and other governance
25 models to see how they might apply to maintenance, billing, capital improvements, rate stability,
26 services delivery, and more to the 1.8 million residents served by Baltimore City water.

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS indicate matter added to existing law.
[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

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1 The Mayor of Baltimore will make 5 appointments to the Task Force, and work with Baltimore
2 County to staff the Task Force. The Task Force must publish its findings in January of 2024, and
3 prepare any legislation it proposes to implement its findings.

4 There remain several outstanding questions regarding the work of the Regional Water Task
5 Force that the City Council would like to discuss with agency officials. During the hearing, the
6 City Council would like to be briefed on the following:

- 7 • an outline of the recommendations in the 2021 Water/Sever Services Comprehensive
8 Business Process Review study;
- 9 • a list of the individuals who will be appointed to the Task Force by the Mayor of
10 Baltimore City;
- 11 • an outline of the process the Task Force will be taking to create and assess various
12 recommendations, including, but not limited to:
 - 13 • how the Task Force will allow the public to provide input on challenges with
14 the current systems;
 - 15 • how the Task Force will allow the public to provide input on the Task Force's
16 draft recommendations;
 - 17 • an equity assessment to inform the recommendations as they are developed
18 and a future equity assessment on the Task Force's draft recommendations;
 - 19 • an economic assessment on the impact of the recommendations;
 - 20 • an assessment of the impact on workers and jobs for City employees;
 - 21 • an analysis of how the recommendations will preserve the Baltimore City's
22 control of the water system;
 - 23 • a timeline for a report draft and public comment period; and
 - 24 • any other relevant information the Committee may need.

25 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF BALTIMORE,** That the City
26 Council representatives from the Office of the City Administrator, the Director of the
27 Department of Public Works, the Mayor's Office of Government Relations, the Office of Equity
28 and Civil Rights, and any other relevant agencies to report on the topics outlined in this
29 Resolution and provide additional information as needed by the Committee.

30 **AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED,** That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the City
31 Administrator, the Director of the Department of Public Works, the Interim Director of the
32 Mayor's Office of Government Relations, the Chief Equity Officer and Director of the Office of
33 Equity and Civil Rights, and the Mayor's Legislative Liaison to the City Council.