



Legislation Text

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The official copy considered by the City Council is the first reader copy.

Introductory*

City of Baltimore Council Bill R (Resolution)

Introduced by: Councilmember Ramos

A Resolution Entitled

A Council Resolution concerning **Baltimore Regional Water Governance Task Force**

For the purpose of urging the Baltimore Regional Water Governance Task Force to include the City Council in the Task Force's deliberations and to consider stormwater management, equity, and fair representation for Baltimore City on the Board of any potential new governance structure.

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

On September 27th, 2023, the Public Safety and Government Operations Committee held a hearing on City Council Bill 23-0182R, Informational Hearing - Baltimore Regional Water Governance Task Force. This resolution calls for an oversight hearing to understand the work of the Baltimore Regional Water Task Force.

During that hearing, it was clear that the work of the Task Force does not include 4 very important considerations. The Baltimore City Council is calling on the Baltimore Regional Water Governance Task Force to include these items in their deliberations and recommendations:

- **Stormwater:** Any conversation regarding regional water must include stormwater management and planning. Baltimore City has experienced monumental rain storms in recent years, and is planning significant infrastructure projects to mitigate the impacts of flooding. While the analysis to establish the right solution to the flooding includes all water coming into the area, these projects will not be successful if there isn't a regional approach to planning and management of stormwater at a regional level. Legal boundaries between counties have no bearing on stormwater flow. Stormwater from Baltimore County inevitably flows into Baltimore City and has devastating impacts in our neighborhoods, causing floods, sewer overflows, and sewage leaks in the basements of homeowners. A regional approach to stormwater is the most effective way to address this growing problem.

- **Equity:** Equity should be the center of the deliberations and conversation about water systems and delivery. Baltimore residents pay more than Baltimore County residents for the right to have clean drinking water delivered efficiently to their homes. Conversations about leadership of the new structure, water delivery, rates, and service options must include ensuring that our majority Black and increasingly diverse community are not disproportionately bearing the fiscal burden of our aging water system. All consumers must pay their fair share while allowing for affordability programs for those who need them.
- **Majority Baltimore City votes:** If a new regional governance structure is established, Baltimore City must have the majority of votes on the Board. The water and wastewater system is Baltimore City's asset and most of the customers of the system are Baltimore City residents. It is only fair that Baltimore City residents make up the majority of the Board.
- **Involvement of City Council:** The Baltimore City Council has concerns about the lack of engagement with elected officials in Baltimore City. If Baltimore City is being asked to approve a new system, elected officials should be included in the deliberations and decision-making related to the recommendations. The Baltimore City Council urges the Baltimore Regional Water Governance Task Force to engage the public and this body in its discussions and deliberations.

Now, therefore, be it resolved by the City Council of Baltimore, That the Baltimore City Council urges the Baltimore Regional Water Governance Task Force to include the City Council in the Task Force's deliberations and to consider stormwater management, equity, and fair representation for Baltimore City on the Board of any potential new governance structure.

And be it further resolved, That a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Baltimore Regional Water Governance Task Force and the Mayor's Legislative liaison to the City Council.