SENATE BILL 1174

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By: Senator McCray (By Request – Baltimore City Administration) Introduced and read first time: February 15, 2024 Assigned to: Rules

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 Baltimore Regional Water Authority Governance Workgroup – Established

FOR the purpose of establishing the Baltimore Regional Water Authority Governance
 Workgroup to study the regional water authority governance approach in the
 Baltimore region; and generally relating to the Baltimore Regional Water Authority
 Governance Workgroup.

7 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,8 That:

- 9 (a) There is a Baltimore Regional Water Authority Governance Workgroup.
- 10 (b) (1) The Workgroup consists of the following members:
- 11 (i) one member of the Senate of Maryland, appointed by the 12 President of the Senate;
- 13 (ii) one member of the House of Delegates, appointed by the Speaker14 of the House;
- 15 (iii) two members appointed by the Governor;
- 16 (iv) five members appointed by the Mayor of Baltimore City;
- 17 (v) three members appointed by the County Executive of Baltimore18 County; and
- (vi) one member from either Anne Arundel County, Carroll County,
 Howard County, or Harford County, appointed by the Chair of the Baltimore Metropolitan
 Council.

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW. [Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



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1		(2) Each member shall:			
2			(i)	have	knowledge of:
3				1.	water resources management and protection;
4 5	2. the management and operation of water or wastewater systems or comparable expertise;				
6				3.	environmental finance;
7				4.	human resources management; or
8				5.	environmental justice and equity; or
9			(ii)	repre	sent ratepayers in their respective jurisdictions.
10 11	(c) The Mayor of Baltimore City and the County Executive of Baltimore County shall jointly designate a chair of the Workgroup.				
$\begin{array}{c} 12 \\ 13 \end{array}$	(d) The Mayor of Baltimore City and the County Executive of Baltimore County shall jointly provide staff for the Workgroup.				
14	(e) A member of the Workgroup:				
15		(1)	may 1	not rec	eive compensation as a member of the Workgroup; but
$\begin{array}{c} 16 \\ 17 \end{array}$	(2) is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard State Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.				
18	(f)	(1)	The V	Vorkgr	oup shall strive for consensus among its members.
19		(2)	An af	firmat	ive vote of 10 members is needed for the Workgroup to act.
20	(g)	The V	Vorkgr	oup sh	all:
$\begin{array}{c} 21\\ 22\\ 23 \end{array}$	(1) review the report of the Baltimore Regional Water Governance Task Force submitted in accordance with Chapter 179 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2023;				
$\begin{array}{c} 24 \\ 25 \end{array}$	governance	(2) model			issues relevant to implementing a regional water authority fore region, including:
$\frac{26}{27}$	a regional w	vater a	(i) uthorit	1. zy affec	developing an equity analysis to analyze how the shift to ts vulnerable residents in the area; and

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1 2. recommending programs to assist potentially affected 2 residents during the implementation;

3 (ii) developing a financial transition plan to analyze how 4 implementing a regional water authority affects the finances of each jurisdiction within the 5 governance area, including pension and benefit commitments and debt service;

6 (iii) assessing the available workforce for a regional water authority, 7 including hiring new employees and transitioning existing employees from Baltimore City 8 and applicable counties to the regional water authority;

9 (iv) reviewing any legal and legislative actions required for 10 transitioning to a regional water authority governance model, including analyzing changes 11 needed to the applicable city and county codes and charters; and

12 (v) assessing the administrative and operational changes required 13 for implementing a regional water authority, including whether stormwater management 14 would fall under the purview of the regional water authority;

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analyze whether creating a City–County Rate Board is necessary to:

- 16 (i) ensure fairness for consumers; and
- 17 (ii) balance city and county rates; and

18 (4) review the regional governance models recommended in the report of 19 the Baltimore Regional Water Governance Task Force submitted in accordance with 20 Chapter 179 of the Acts of the General Assembly of 2023 and other existing and potential 21 regional water and wastewater governance models to assess how different regional 22 approaches may improve:

- 23 (i) management;
- 24 (ii) operations;

(3)

- 25 (iii) employee recruitment;
- 26 (iv) retention and training;
- 27 (v) billing and collections;
- 28 (vi) planning for capital improvements;
- 29 (vii) emergency management; and
- 30 (viii) rate stability for customers.

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1 (h) (1) The Workgroup shall hire independent consultants to facilitate the 2 requirements of subsection (g) of this section, including:

3 (i) outside counsel to assist with the analysis of issues related to 4 regional governance; and

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(ii) experts in equity analysis.

6 (2) For fiscal year 2026, the Governor shall include in the annual budget 7 bill an appropriation of \$500,000 for the purpose of hiring independent consultants under 8 paragraph (1) of this subsection.

9 (i) On or before June 30, 2027, the Workgroup shall report its findings to the 10 Mayor of Baltimore City, the County Executive of Baltimore County, the Governor, and, in 11 accordance with § 2–1257 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly.

12 (j) In developing the report required under subsection (i) of this section, the 13 Workgroup shall consult with the Office of the Attorney General.

14 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July 15 1, 2024. It shall remain effective for a period of 3 years and, at the end of June 30, 2027, 16 this Act, with no further action required by the General Assembly, shall be abrogated and 17 of no further force and effect.

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