

# Opposition to Loss of Local Control of Baltimore's Water and Wastewater System

December 15, 2023

Dear Members of the Baltimore Regional Water Governance Task Force:

We, the undersigned 21 organizations, urge you to reject any proposal for a new regional water authority to run our water and wastewater system — the City's largest asset.

A new authority will open the door to future water privatization and likely lead to major rate hikes for Baltimore families. It would take control away from city elected officials, could cause harm for the thousands of unionized workers in city and county, and could deepen the regional water affordability crisis, which disproportionately affects Baltimore's communities of color and low-income residents.

Based on the figures provided by the task force and independent analysis, we estimate that the total cost of the transition of the water and sewer system to a regional water authority could be between \$1.7 billion to \$2.5 billion. That would cause rate shock for Baltimore families and local businesses who will ultimately pay the costs through higher water bills.

Because of the rushed process, the task force has been unable to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the equity, legal, and economic impacts of a regional authority. As the task force moves towards a final vote, vital questions remain unanswered about the consequences of such a monumental change to our water system.

For all these reasons, we are demanding that you reject any proposal to establish a regional water authority.

As a better solution for our regional challenges, we urge you to recommend improving the intermunicipal agreements and establishing a City-County Water Committee. A formal coordinated effort between the city and county should improve how we invest in and maintain our water and wastewater system, based on racial and economic equity analyses and updated cost models, and it should establish a long-term strategy to ensure safe, clean, and affordable water and wastewater services for the region.

Sincerely,

1199SEIU United Healthcare Workers East, Maryland/DC  
AFT-Maryland  
CASA  
Citizens for Community Improvement

City Union of Baltimore  
Clean Water Action  
Community Development Clinic, University of Baltimore School of Law  
Dan Meyers Photography  
Food & Water Watch  
Friends of Gwynns Falls Parkway  
Jews United for Justice  
Liberty Square Community Association  
Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service  
Mt. Olivet Community Association  
NAACP Legal Defense Fund (LDF)  
Public Justice Center  
Reservoir Hill Association  
The Elephant Free School  
The People's Association of Oliver Community  
Westport Community Economic Development Corporation  
Woodbourne-McCabe Neighborhood Association