



STEPHANIE RAWLINGS-BLAKE
MAYOR

*100 Holliday Street, Room 250
Baltimore, Maryland 21202*

November 14, 2016

The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings
United States House of Representatives
2230 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Representative Cummings:

On behalf of the citizens of Baltimore City and our regional water and wastewater systems, I am writing to urge your support for enacting a final Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) based on the Senate's approved bill when Congress returns. This important legislation contains critically important measures to help our communities meet their safe and clean water goals.

In addition to authorizing U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) projects, the overwhelmingly bipartisan Senate bill includes common sense reforms to the Clean Water Act (CWA) to address ratepayer affordability challenges through codification of Integrated Planning, revising affordability guidelines, and enabling communities' greater time to meet stringent water quality standards. The proposed reforms strike a fair balance between ensuring our clean water goals of protecting public health and the environment while accommodating ratepayers' ability to pay for the necessary infrastructure. The proposed reforms will also enable communities to undertake innovative approaches to addressing clean water issues.

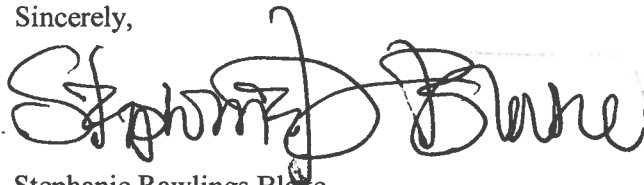
Baltimore was one of the first cities in the country to receive a wet weather sanitary sewer overflow consent decree in 2002, which mandates a schedule of capital investment projects to eliminate overflows. This is a costly undertaking, with \$900 million spent so far and another \$1.2 billion in continuing investment estimated to complete this commitment. The mandated projects have traditionally taken up most of the available capital funding, with little left for infrastructure investment. Baltimore's detailed Integrated Planning Framework (IPF) process would allow for a more objective criteria-rated process to ensure the most environmentally beneficial and quality of life projects are funded early on, flattening the initial years' investment in mandated projects, and extending some of the projects that have fewer benefits into the out years to lessen the pressure on rate increases. This will all help in the management of our program for the sake of our ratepayers. Without any meaningful source of assistance, extending the schedule and pace of mandated projects is one of the few tools we would have to keep rates from increasing even more. In addition, our vulnerable populations are not protected by the current EPA guidelines that use a community's Median Household Income (MHI) to define affordability. Baltimore may have an MHI of \$41,819 (2010 Census data adjusted to 2014 dollars), but when income is examined at the Census tract level, many of our neighborhoods' residents are subsisting on earnings well below the City's MHI.

The Senate package also takes important steps in support of clean and safe water infrastructure investment. EPA's quadrennial "needs surveys" for drinking water and wastewater treatment systems indicate that well over \$600 billion in additional spending will be needed over the next twenty years for water and wastewater treatment, with much of these costs related to wet weather controls. Several provisions in the Senate package authorize important financing approaches to help meet this need including a water trust fund to leverage private revenue for low-cost financing provided through the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund programs. The package additionally authorizes grant financing for communities struggling to reduce and/or eliminate sewer overflows. Even with State Revolving Fund assistance, infrastructure needs combined with federal and State requirements have driven over a decade of consistent rate increases, and we have just had to approve another three years of annual increases to keep our capital program progressing. These constant increases in our water and sewer rates have created problems for our most economically vulnerable citizens.

Finally, the House and Senate bills facilitate collaboration on water resources management and deployment of innovative technology in several key ways. Both bills contain measures to encourage the ACOE to identify opportunities for supporting local water management goals when designing flood control projects. The Senate package authorizes several key investment programs to spur development and deployment of innovative technologies in clean water management. Both bills also contain measures to help communities to achieve greater resiliency in the face of extreme weather events and rising sea levels.

Baltimore has been working hard to meet the challenges of protecting our waterways from pollution and maintaining our infrastructure for the benefit of our citizens. The costs to do so are borne by our ratepayers. With a quarter of our population living at or below the poverty line, not all Baltimore households can continue to absorb rate increases. I urge you to help enact a final WRDA 2016 package that adopts the measures discussed above and provides meaningful assistance to communities in achieving their clean water goals. Thank you, and please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephanie Rawlings Blake". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Stephanie" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Blake".

Stephanie Rawlings Blake
Mayor
City of Baltimore

cc: Andrew R. Smullian, Deputy Mayor of Government Relations and Labor
Rudolph S. Chow, Director, Baltimore City Department of Public Works
Kevin F. Kelly, Washington D.C. Representative for Baltimore City