

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2023**

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SENATE BILL 858

Short Title: Blue Ribbon Task Force/Sewer Infrastructure. (Public)

Sponsors: Senators Grafstein, Batch, and Garrett (Primary Sponsors).

Referred to: Rules and Operations of the Senate

May 6, 2024

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE BLUE RIBBON TASK FORCE ON WASTEWATER
INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT IN NORTH CAROLINA.

Whereas, the development of wastewater infrastructure is essential to economic growth in North Carolina, particularly rural areas and rapidly developing suburban counties of the State; and

Whereas, the State Water Infrastructure Authority estimated in 2017 that there was \$11 billion in unmet wastewater infrastructure capital needs across the State; and

Whereas, it is in the interest of the State's environment and citizens to have access to modern, functional wastewater infrastructure; Now, therefore,
The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1.(a) Establishment; Purpose. – The Blue Ribbon Task Force on Wastewater Infrastructure Development in North Carolina (Task Force) is established. The purpose of the Task Force is (i) to review and assess the current state of wastewater infrastructure in the State, (ii) to develop strategies and plans for the effective implementation of wastewater treatment projects, for addressing existing challenges and barriers to project financing and construction, and for addressing future needs within the State, and (iii) to identify funding mechanisms, including potential contributions from industrial wastewater discharges, to support wastewater infrastructure development.

SECTION 1.(b) Task Force. – The Task Force shall consist of 18 members, appointed as follows:

- (1) Four members of the House of Representatives upon the recommendation of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, one of whom shall be a member of the minority party.
- (2) Four members of the Senate upon the recommendation of the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, one of whom shall be a member of the minority party.
- (3) The Director of the Division of Water Infrastructure of the Department of Environmental Quality or the Director's designee, ex officio and nonvoting.
- (4) The Director of the Local Government Commission or the Director's designee, ex officio and nonvoting.
- (5) Four county commissioners, who are advisory and nonvoting, one of whom is appointed upon the recommendation of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, one of whom is appointed upon the recommendation of the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives, one of whom is appointed upon the recommendation of the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, and



1 one of whom is appointed upon the recommendation of the Minority Leader
2 of the Senate.

3 (6) Four representatives of a local government wastewater entity, who are
4 advisory and nonvoting, one of whom is appointed upon the recommendation
5 of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, one of whom is appointed
6 upon the recommendation of the Minority Leader of the House of
7 Representatives, one of whom is appointed upon the recommendation of the
8 President Pro Tempore of the Senate, and one of whom is appointed upon the
9 recommendation of the Minority Leader of the Senate. For purposes of this
10 act, a local government wastewater entity is any of the following:

- 11 a. A water and sewer authority created pursuant to Article 1 of Chapter
12 162A of the General Statutes.
- 13 b. A metropolitan sewerage district created pursuant to Article 5 of
14 Chapter 162A of the General Statutes.
- 15 c. A metropolitan water and sewerage district created pursuant to Article
16 5A of Chapter 162A of the General Statutes.
- 17 d. A county water and sewer district created pursuant to Article 6 of
18 Chapter 162A of the General Statutes.
- 19 e. A sanitary district created pursuant to Part 2 of Article 2 of Chapter
20 130A of the General Statutes that is providing wastewater collection
21 or treatment services.
- 22 f. A joint agency created pursuant to Part 1 or Part 5 of Article 20 of
23 Chapter 160A of the General Statutes that is providing wastewater.

24 **SECTION 1.(c)** The President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the
25 House of Representatives shall each appoint a cochair of the Task Force from among its
26 membership.

27 **SECTION 1.(d)** The Task Force shall meet upon the call of its cochairs. A quorum
28 of the Task Force is a majority of its members. No action may be taken except by a majority vote
29 at a meeting at which a quorum is present. The Task Force, while in the discharge of its official
30 duties, may exercise all powers provided for under G.S. 120-19 through G.S. 120-19.4. The Task
31 Force may contract for professional, clerical, or consultant services, as provided by
32 G.S. 120-32.02. If the Task Force hires a consultant, the consultant shall not be a State employee
33 or a person currently under contract with the State to provide services. Members of the Task
34 Force shall receive per diem, subsistence, and travel allowances as provided in G.S. 120-3.1. The
35 expenses of the Task Force shall be considered expenses incurred for the joint operation of the
36 General Assembly.

37 **SECTION 1.(e)** In conducting this study, the Task Force shall consult with
38 representatives of the Department of Commerce, the Economic Development Partnership of
39 North Carolina, the Utilities Commission, and the Golden LEAF Foundation.

40 **SECTION 1.(f)** The Legislative Services Officer shall assign professional and
41 clerical staff to assist the Task Force in its work. The Director of Legislative Assistants of the
42 House of Representatives and the Director of Legislative Assistants of the Senate shall assign
43 clerical support to the Task Force.

44 **SECTION 1.(g)** Meetings of the Task Force are authorized to begin on or after July
45 1, 2024. The Task Force shall submit a final report on the results of its study, including proposed
46 legislation, to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Agriculture and Natural and
47 Economic Resources on or before December 1, 2026, by filing a copy of the report with the
48 Office of the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the Office of the Speaker of the House of
49 Representatives, the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Agriculture and Natural and
50 Economic Resources, and the Legislative Library. The Task Force shall terminate on December
51 1, 2026, or upon the filing of its final report, whichever comes first.

1 **SECTION 1.(h)** The sum of ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) in recurring funds for
2 the 2024-2025 fiscal year is appropriated from the unappropriated balance remaining in the
3 General Fund to support the activities of the Task Force.

4 **SECTION 2.** This act is effective when it becomes law.