



Advocacy & Accountability

Representing Over 3 Million People in Massachusetts Communities Since 1985

May 18, 2021

Senate President Karen E. Spilka
State House – Room 332
Boston, MA 02133

Senator Michael Rodrigues
State House – Room 212
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Senate President Spilka and Chairman Rodrigues,

The MWRA Advisory Board was statutorily created in the same act that created the MWRA. Our role is to provide a perspective on budgetary, policy, and environmental issues that impact our communities and ratepayers.

Our role was also statutorily expanded to serve on a 5-member Water Supply Protection Trust (WSPT) that was created to protect our drinking water.

Back in 2004, Senator Brewer championed the legislation to create the WSPT, which gave oversight of the DCR Watershed Division to a 5-member board. Watershed costs were removed from the state budget and made the responsibility of the MWRA (approximately \$27 million annually). The goal of this change was to insulate the protection of our critical watersheds - which provide drinking water to 47 communities in and around Boston - from politics, state bureaucracy, and the uncertainties of state finances, to better position the MWRA to avoid the necessity of building a costly (nearly \$500 million) filtration system. Up until the last few years, the Trust has been successful.

Something happened in 2018. Since then, it has been nearly impossible to fill positions in a timely manner. Although the Trust has authorized the filling of those positions, the Executive Office of Administration and Finance has imposed caps on hiring. Nearly 20 positions of the 150 authorized remain unfilled due to these caps and bureaucratic restrictions.

Recently, the Commonwealth's own Department of Environmental Protection raised concerns on unfilled positions in their annual evaluation of Watershed activities.

Many stakeholders have weighed in. There is absolutely no need for this to happen. This is exactly why the Trust was created!

Senator Gobi has introduced amendment 294 to the FY22 State Budget in section 2, item 2800-0101, which pure and simply reinforces the 5-member Trust's statutory role by adding at the following:

“; provided further, that in accordance with an annual staffing plan, the staffing levels, hiring, and promotions at the division of water supply protection, as granted under section 75 of chapter 10 of the General Laws, shall not be subject to any restrictions, limitations, or caps imposed by any executive office or department of the commonwealth”



Advocacy & Accountability

Representing Over 3 Million People in Massachusetts Communities Since 1985

I implore you to allow this language to be included in your budget.

For your benefit, I have included a link to Chapter 149 of the Acts of 2004, as well as the annual watershed inspection letters by DEP, as well as the Advisory Board's information video on our watersheds. This information can be found at <https://mwraadvisoryboard.com/wspt-amendment/>.

In closing, we need the Trust to be able to do the job it was created to do.

If you have any questions. I am available to discuss at Joseph.Favaloro@MWRAAdvisoryBoard.com or 617-788-2051.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph Favaloro".

Joseph Favaloro
Executive Director, MWRA Advisory Board

Cc: Sen. Anne Gobi
Karen Almeida
Mary Anne Padien
Vandana M. Rao
Fred Hayes
William Meehan
Fred Laskey
Louis Taverna
Sen. Stephen Brewer