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LDF Issues Statement on Baltimore Water Crisis

Days after the water system in Jackson, Mississippi, home to the second-largest Black population in the United States, reached its breaking point, Baltimore, Maryland, 62% of whose residents are Black, is now [facing a water and public health crisis](#) of its own. An active boil water order is in effect for residents in parts of West Baltimore after E. coli bacteria were detected in water samples.

In response to the latest developments, [Legal Defense Fund](#) (LDF) President and Director-Counsel Janai Nelson issued the following statement:

“Yet again, residents in a predominantly Black city are having to deal with a water crisis – the predictable result of decades of poor infrastructure investments in our municipal physical plants. It is imperative that the City of Baltimore, its leaders, and the Baltimore Department of Public Health provide immediate relief for residents and long-term solutions that ensure future water crises are prevented.

“In addition, as in any crisis, it is essential that city leaders quickly and accurately communicate with the public to allay fears and provide important updates on how they can access clean water until this current crisis is resolved. Poor communication puts the public at risk, causes confusion, and worsens conditions that are already egregious. The city must also ensure that access to clean water during this crisis, including for school children, does not come at an additional expense to local residents, who already pay taxes to fund city services.

“Black communities like Baltimore, Jackson, Flint, Detroit, [Cleveland](#), and other marginalized communities continue to suffer most acutely from water accessibility and water quality issues. LDF has long believed that access to clean, healthy, reliable water is [a fundamental human right](#) and we will continue to stand with these and other communities to fight this environmental and racial justice crisis and put an end to the disproportionate racial impact of the deprivation of water services.

“We were pleased to see the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act – a long overdue investment in our nation’s infrastructure – become law last year. As this investment is implemented, it is imperative that the critical needs of communities of color, which are often overlooked and underfunded, be prioritized.”

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Founded in 1940, the [Legal Defense Fund](#) (LDF) is the nation's first civil rights law organization. LDF's Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the Legal Defense Fund or LDF. Please note that LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights.