

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2019**

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SENATE BILL 810

Short Title: Water/Wastewater Public Enterprise Reform. (Public)

Sponsors: Senators Brown, Harrington, and B. Jackson (Primary Sponsors).

Referred to: Rules and Operations of the Senate

May 20, 2020

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

1
2 AN ACT TO IMPROVE VIABILITY OF THE WATER AND WASTEWATER SYSTEMS OF
3 CERTAIN UNITS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT BY REQUIRING LOCAL
4 GOVERNMENT COMMISSION APPROVAL OF GRANT APPLICATIONS; TO
5 REQUIRE CERTAIN WATER AND WASTEWATER SYSTEMS TO UNDERGO A
6 REVIEW OF INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGEMENT, ORGANIZATIONAL
7 MANAGEMENT, AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT; TO CREATE THE VIABLE
8 UTILITY RESERVE TO PROVIDE GRANT MONEY FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT
9 UNITS; TO PROVIDE A STATUTORY PROCESS FOR MERGER AND DISSOLUTION
10 OF WATER AND WASTEWATER SYSTEMS ESTABLISHED UNDER CHAPTER
11 162A OF THE GENERAL STATUTES; TO PROMOTE THE IMPORTANCE OF
12 INTERLOCAL AGREEMENTS TO THE OPERATION OF WATER AND
13 WASTEWATER SYSTEMS; AND TO STUDY SUBBASIN TRANSFERS AND
14 HISTORICAL CHARTERS.

15 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

16
17 **PART I. REFORM OF WATER AND WASTEWATER PUBLIC ENTERPRISES**

18 **SECTION 1.(a)** G.S. 159G-20 reads as rewritten:

19 "**§ 159G-20. Definitions.**

20 The following definitions apply in this Chapter:

21 ...

22 (4a) Distressed unit. – A public water system or wastewater system operated by a
23 local government unit exhibiting signs of failure to identify or address those
24 financial or operating needs necessary to enable that system to become or to
25 remain a local government unit generating sufficient revenues to adequately
26 fund management and operations, personnel, appropriate levels of
27 maintenance, and reinvestment that facilitate the provision of reliable water
28 or wastewater services.

29 ...

30 (13) Local government unit. – Any of the following:

- 31 a. A city as defined in G.S. 160A-1.
32 b. A county.
33 c. A consolidated city-county as defined in G.S. 160B-2.
34 d. ~~A county water and sewer district created pursuant to Article 6 of~~
35 ~~Chapter 162A of the General Statutes.~~ Any of the following entities
36 created pursuant to Chapter 162A of the General Statutes:



- 1 1. A water and sewer authority created pursuant to Article 1.
- 2 2. A metropolitan water district created pursuant to Article 4.
- 3 3. A metropolitan sewerage district created pursuant to Article 5.
- 4 4. A metropolitan water and sewerage district created pursuant to
- 5 Article 5A.
- 6 5. A county water and sewer district created pursuant to Article
- 7 6.
- 8 e. ~~A metropolitan sewerage district or a metropolitan water district~~
- 9 ~~created pursuant to Article 4 of Chapter 162A of the General Statutes.~~
- 10 f. ~~A water and sewer authority created under Article 1 of Chapter 162A~~
- 11 ~~of the General Statutes.~~
- 12 g. A sanitary district created pursuant to Part 2 of Article 2 of Chapter
- 13 130A of the General Statutes.
- 14 h. A joint agency created pursuant to Part 1 or Part 5 of Article 20 of
- 15 Chapter 160A of the General Statutes.
- 16 i. A joint agency that was created by agreement between two cities and
- 17 towns to operate an airport pursuant to G.S. 63-56 and that provided
- 18 drinking water and wastewater services off the airport premises before
- 19 1 January 1995.

20 ...

21 (22a) Viable Utility Reserve. – The Viable Utility Reserve established in

22 G.S. 159G-22 as an account in the Water Infrastructure Fund.

23 "

24 **SECTION 1.(b)** G.S. 159G-22 is amended by adding two new subsections to read:

25 "(h) Viable Utility Reserve. – The Viable Utility Reserve is established as an account

26 within the Water Infrastructure Fund. The account is established to receive appropriated State

27 funds to be used for grants to local government units for those purposes authorized under this

28 Article. Revenue credited to the Viable Utility Reserve is neither received from the federal

29 government nor provided as a match for federal funds.

30 (i) Viable Utility Accounts. – The Department is directed to establish accounts within

31 the Viable Utility Reserve to administer grants for public water systems or wastewater systems

32 owned by local government units."

33 **SECTION 1.(c)** G.S. 159G-30 reads as rewritten:

34 "**§ 159G-30. Department's responsibility.**

35 The Department, through the ~~Division of Water Infrastructure, Division,~~ administers loans

36 the following:

- 37 (1) Loans and grants made from the CWSRF, the DWSRF, the Wastewater
- 38 Reserve, and the Drinking Water Reserve and shall administer the Reserve.
- 39 (2) The award of funds by the State Water Infrastructure Authority from the
- 40 Community Development Block Grant program to local government units for
- 41 infrastructure projects.
- 42 (3) Grants made from the Viable Utility Reserve."

43 **SECTION 1.(d)** G.S. 159G-31 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

44 "(d) A local government unit is eligible to apply for a grant from the Viable Utility

45 Reserve."

46 **SECTION 1.(e)** G.S. 159G-32 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

47 "(d) Viable Utility Reserve. – The Department is authorized to make grants from the

48 Viable Utility Reserve to do any of the following:

- 49 (1) Provide physical interconnection and extension of public water or wastewater
- 50 infrastructure to provide regional service.
- 51 (2) Rehabilitate existing public water or wastewater infrastructure.

- 1 (3) Decentralize an existing public water system or wastewater system into
2 smaller viable parts.
- 3 (4) Fund a study of any one or more of the following:
4 a. Rates.
5 b. Asset inventory and assessment.
6 c. Merger and regionalization options.
- 7 (5) Fund other options deemed feasible which result in local government units
8 generating sufficient revenues to adequately fund management and
9 operations, personnel, appropriate levels of maintenance, and reinvestment
10 that facilitate the provision of reliable water or wastewater services."

11 **SECTION 1.(f)** Article 2 of Chapter 159G of the General Statutes is amended by
12 adding a new section to read:

13 "**§ 159G-34.5. Grant types available from Viable Utility Reserve.**

14 (a) The Department is authorized to make the following types of grants from the Viable
15 Utility Reserve:

- 16 (1) Asset assessment and rate study grant. – An asset inventory and assessment
17 grant is available to inventory the existing public water or wastewater system,
18 or both, document the condition of the inventoried infrastructure, and conduct
19 a rate study to determine a rate structure sufficient to prevent the local
20 government unit from becoming a distressed unit.
- 21 (2) Merger/regionalization feasibility grant. – A merger/regionalization grant is
22 available to determine the feasibility of consolidating the management of
23 multiple water or wastewater systems into a single operation or to provide
24 regional treatment or water supply and the best way of carrying out the
25 consolidation or regionalization. The Department shall not make a grant under
26 this subdivision for a merger or regionalization proposal that would result in
27 a new surface water transfer regulated under G.S. 143-215.22L.
- 28 (3) Project grant. – A project grant is available for a portion of the costs of a public
29 water system or wastewater system project as defined in G.S. 159G-32(d).

30 (b) A grant awarded from the Viable Utility Reserve may be awarded to a regional
31 council of government created under Part 2 of Article 20 of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes
32 or to a regional planning commission created under Article 19 of Chapter 153A of the General
33 Statutes, if the Department and the Local Government Commission determine it is in the best
34 interest of the local government unit.

35 (c) Each type of grant must be administered through a separate account within the Viable
36 Utility Reserve."

37 **SECTION 1.(g)** G.S. 159G-35 reads as rewritten:

38 "**§ 159G-35. Criteria for loans and grants.**

39 (a) CWSRF and DWSRF. – Federal law determines the criteria for awarding a loan or
40 grant from the CWSRF or the DWSRF. An award of a loan or grant from one of these accounts
41 must meet the criteria set under federal law. The Department is directed to establish through
42 negotiation with the United States Environmental Protection Agency the criteria for evaluating
43 applications for loans and grants from the CWSRF and the DWSRF and the priority assigned to
44 the criteria. The Department must incorporate the negotiated criteria and priorities in the
45 Capitalization Grant Operating Agreement between the Department and the United States
46 Environmental Protection Agency. The criteria and priorities incorporated in the Agreement
47 apply to a loan or grant from the CWSRF or the DWSRF. The priority considerations in
48 G.S. 159G-23 do not apply to a loan or grant from the CWSRF or the DWSRF.

49 (b) Certain Reserves. – The priority considerations in G.S. 159G-23 apply to a loan or
50 grant from the Wastewater Reserve or the Drinking Water Reserve. The Department may

1 establish by rule other criteria that apply to a loan or grant from the Wastewater Reserve or the
2 Drinking Water Reserve.

3 (c) Viable Utility Reserve. – The Local Government Commission and the Authority shall
4 jointly develop evaluation criteria for grants from the Viable Utility Reserve. These evaluation
5 criteria shall be used to review applications and award grants as provided in G.S. 159G-39."

6 **SECTION 1.(h)** G.S. 159G-36 reads as rewritten:

7 **"§ 159G-36. Limits on loans and grants.**

8 (a) CWSRF and DWSRF. – Federal law governs loans and grants from the CWSRF and
9 the DWSRF. An award of a loan or grant from one of these accounts must be consistent with
10 federal law.

11 (b) Certain Reserve Cost Limit. – The amount of a loan or grant from the Wastewater
12 Reserve or the Drinking Water Reserve may not exceed the construction costs of a project. A
13 loan or grant from one of these Reserves is available only to the extent that other funding sources
14 are not reasonably available to the applicant.

15 (b1) Viable Utility Reserve Cost Limit. – The amount of a grant from the Viable Utility
16 Reserve shall not exceed the construction costs of a project. A grant from this Reserve is available
17 only to the extent that other funding sources are not reasonably available to the applicant.

18 (c) Certain Reserve Recipient Limit. – The following limits apply to the loan or grant
19 types made from the Wastewater Reserve or the Drinking Water Reserve to the same local
20 government unit or nonprofit water corporation:

21 (1) The amount of loans awarded for a fiscal year may not exceed three million
22 dollars (\$3,000,000).

23 (2) The amount of loans awarded for three consecutive fiscal years for targeted
24 interest rate projects may not exceed three million dollars (\$3,000,000).

25 (3) The amount of project grants awarded for three consecutive fiscal years may
26 not exceed three million dollars (\$3,000,000).

27 (4) The amount of merger/regionalization feasibility grants awarded for three
28 consecutive fiscal years may not exceed fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000).

29 (5) The amount of asset inventory and assessment grants awarded for three
30 consecutive fiscal years may not exceed one hundred fifty thousand dollars
31 (\$150,000).

32 (d) Viable Utility Reserve Recipient Limit. – Grants under the Viable Utility Reserve
33 shall not exceed fifteen million dollars (\$15,000,000) to any single local government unit. Where
34 two or more local government units are merging into a single utility, the total grant awarded shall
35 not exceed thirty million dollars (\$30,000,000)."

36 **SECTION 1.(i)** G.S. 159G-37 reads as rewritten:

37 **"§ 159G-37. Application to CWSRF, Wastewater Reserve, DWSRF, ~~and Drinking Water~~**
38 **~~Reserve-Reserve, and Viable Utility Reserve.~~**

39 (a) Application. – An application for a loan or grant from the CWSRF, the Wastewater
40 Reserve, the DWSRF, or the Drinking Water ~~Reserve-Reserve~~, or a grant from the Viable Utility
41 Reserve, must be filed with the ~~Division of Water Infrastructure of the Department- Division.~~ An
42 application must be submitted on a form prescribed by the Division and must contain the
43 information required by the Division. An applicant must submit to the Division any additional
44 information requested by the Division to enable the Division to make a determination on the
45 application. An application that does not contain information required on the application or
46 requested by the Division is incomplete and is not eligible for consideration. An applicant may
47 submit an application in as many categories as it is eligible for consideration under this Article.

48 (b) Certification. – ~~The Division of Water Infrastructure~~ shall require all local
49 governments applying for loans or grants for water or wastewater purposes to certify that no
50 funds received from water or wastewater utility operations have been transferred to the local
51 government's general fund for the purpose of supplementing the resources of the general fund.

1 The prohibition in this section shall not be interpreted to include payments made to the local
2 government to reimburse the general fund for expenses paid from that fund that are reasonably
3 allocable to the regular and ongoing operations of the utility, including, but not limited to, rent
4 and shared facility costs, engineering and design work, plan review, and shared personnel costs."

5 **SECTION 1.(j)** G.S. 159G-39 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

6 "(e) Viable Utility Reserve Terms. – The Department shall not award a grant from the
7 Viable Utility Reserve Fund unless the Local Government Commission approves the award of
8 the grant and the terms of the grant. The Department and the Local Government Commission
9 may, in their discretion, impose specific performance measures or conditions on any grant
10 awarded from the Viable Utility Reserve."

11 **SECTION 1.(k)** Article 2 of Chapter 159G of the General Statutes is amended by
12 adding a new section to read:

13 **"§ 159G-45. Assessment of local government units; assistance.**

14 (a) The Authority and the Local Government Commission shall develop criteria to
15 determine how local government units should be assessed and reviewed in accordance with this
16 section, and these criteria shall address at least all of the following:

17 (1) Whether the public water or wastewater system serves less than 10,000
18 customers.

19 (2) Whether the public water or wastewater system has an established,
20 operational, and adequately funded program for its repair, maintenance, and
21 management.

22 (3) Whether the annual debt service is disproportionate to the public water or
23 wastewater system's annual revenue.

24 (4) Whether the local government unit has appropriated funds from its utility or
25 public service enterprise fund in accordance with G.S. 159-13(b)(14) in two
26 or more of the preceding five fiscal years without maintaining a reserve fund
27 sufficient to provide for operating expenses, capital outlay, and debt service.

28 (5) Whether the local government unit has appropriated funds to supplement the
29 operating expenses, capital outlay, or debt service on outstanding utility or
30 enterprise bonds or notes in excess of the user fees collected in two or more
31 of the preceding five fiscal years.

32 (b) Utilizing the assessment and review process, the Authority and Local Government
33 Commission shall identify distressed units. Each distressed unit identified under this subsection
34 shall do all of the following:

35 (1) Conduct an asset assessment and rate study, as directed and approved by the
36 Authority and the Local Government Commission.

37 (2) Participate in a training and educational program approved by the Authority
38 and the Local Government Commission for that distressed unit. Attendance
39 shall be mandatory for any governing board members and staff whose
40 participation is required by the Authority and Local Government Commission.
41 The scope of training and education, and its method of delivery, shall be at the
42 discretion of the Authority and Local Government Commission.

43 (3) Develop an action plan, taking into consideration all of the following:

44 a. A short-term and a long-term plan for infrastructure repair,
45 maintenance, and management.

46 b. Continuing education of the governing board and system operating
47 staff.

48 c. Long-term financial management to ensure the public water system or
49 wastewater system will generate sufficient revenue to adequately fund
50 management and operations, personnel, appropriate levels of

1 maintenance, and reinvestment that facilitate the provision of reliable
2 water or wastewater services.

3 d. Any other matters identified by the Authority or the Local Government
4 Commission.

5 (c) Once an identified distressed unit has completed all of the requirements of subsection
6 (b) of this section, that unit shall no longer be identified as a distressed unit for the remainder of
7 that assessment and review cycle.

8 (d) The Authority and the Local Government Commission shall establish the frequency
9 of the cycle for assessment and review of local government units under this section, which shall
10 be no less than every two years."

11 **SECTION 2.** Chapter 162A of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new
12 Article to read:

13 "Article 10.

14 "Dissolution and Merger of Units.

15 "**§ 162A-850. "Unit" defined.**

16 For purposes of this Article, the term "unit" means any of the following entities created
17 pursuant to this Chapter:

18 (1) A water and sewer authority created pursuant to Article 1.

19 (2) A metropolitan water district created pursuant to Article 4.

20 (3) A metropolitan sewerage district created pursuant to Article 5.

21 (4) A metropolitan water and sewerage district created pursuant to Article 5A.

22 (5) A county water and sewer district created pursuant to Article 6.

23 "**§ 162A-855. Information needed to merge or dissolve.**

24 (a) Prior to any action by the Environmental Management Commission under this
25 Article, for any unit to merge or dissolve, all of the following information must be supplied to
26 the Environmental Management Commission:

27 (1) The name of the unit or units to be merged or dissolved.

28 (2) The names of the district board members of the unit or units to be merged or
29 dissolved.

30 (3) The proposed date of the merger or dissolution.

31 (4) A map or description of the jurisdiction of the unit or units to be merged or
32 dissolved.

33 (5) The name of the entity with whom the unit or units will be merged, if
34 applicable.

35 (6) The names of the governing board members or district board members of the
36 entity with which the unit is proposed to be merged, if applicable.

37 (7) A map or description of the jurisdiction of the entity with which the unit is
38 proposed to be merged.

39 (8) Resolutions adopted by each district board or governing board requesting the
40 merger or dissolution.

41 (9) A request from each chair of a district board requesting a merger or dissolution
42 that a representative of the Environmental Management Commission hold a
43 public hearing in that district to discuss the proposed merger or dissolution
44 and to receive public comment. The date, time, and place of the public hearing
45 shall be mutually agreed to by the chair of the Environmental Management
46 Commission and the chair of each requesting district board.

47 (10) A copy of the most recent audit performed in accordance with G.S. 159-34 for
48 the unit to be merged or dissolved.

49 (11) A copy of any permits issued by the Department of Environmental Quality to
50 the unit or units to be merged or dissolved.

1 (12) A copy of any grant awarded under Article 2 of this Chapter involving the unit
2 or units to be merged or dissolved and any conditions thereof, if applicable.

3 (13) Any other information deemed necessary by the Department of Environmental
4 Quality, the Local Government Commission, or the Environmental
5 Management Commission.

6 (b) Upon receipt of a request to dissolve or merge, the Environmental Management
7 Commission shall provide a copy of all information submitted in accordance with this section to
8 the Department of Environmental Quality and the Local Government Commission.

9 (c) Upon confirmation of the time and place of the public hearing, each district board of
10 an affected unit and any other governing board affected shall do all of the following:

11 (1) Cause notice of the public hearing to be posted, at least 30 days prior to the
12 hearing, at the courthouse in any county within which the affected unit lies.

13 (2) Publish the notice at least once a week for four successive weeks in a
14 newspaper having general circulation in the affected unit, the first publication
15 to be at least 30 days prior to the public hearing.

16 (3) Publish notice in any other manner required by the Environmental
17 Management Commission.

18 **§ 162A-860. Merger of units.**

19 (a) Any unit may merge with any other unit, any county, any city, any consolidated
20 city-county, any sanitary district created pursuant to Part 2 of Article 2 of Chapter 130A of the
21 General Statutes, any joint agency created pursuant to Part 1 or Part 5 of Article 20 of Chapter
22 160A of the General Statutes, or any joint agency that was created by agreement between two
23 cities and towns to operate an airport pursuant to G.S. 63-56 and that provided drinking water
24 and wastewater services off the airport premises before January 1, 1995, if the merger is a
25 condition of receiving a grant from the Viable Utility Reserve as provided in Article 2 of Chapter
26 159G of the General Statutes. The Environmental Management Commission shall adopt a
27 resolution transferring the assets, liabilities, and other obligations to the entity with which the
28 unit is being merged and dissolving the unit as provided for in this Article.

29 (b) Any unit may merge with any other unit, any county, any city, any consolidated
30 city-county, any sanitary district created pursuant to Part 2 of Article 2 of Chapter 130A of the
31 General Statutes, any joint agency created pursuant to Part 1 or Part 5 of Article 20 of Chapter
32 160A of the General Statutes, or any joint agency that was created by agreement between two
33 cities and towns to operate an airport pursuant to G.S. 63-56 and that provided drinking water
34 and wastewater services off the airport premises before January 1, 1995, on approval by the
35 Environmental Management Commission, upon consultation with the Department of
36 Environmental Quality and the Local Government Commission. The Environmental
37 Management Commission may adopt a resolution transferring the assets, liabilities, and other
38 obligations to the entity with which the unit is being merged and dissolving the unit as provided
39 for in this Article, if the Environmental Management Commission deems the merger in the best
40 interest of the people of the State.

41 (c) The Environmental Management Commission shall adopt a resolution dissolving a
42 unit and transferring the assets, liabilities, and other obligations of the unit to another unit when
43 the procedures set forth in G.S. 162A-855 have been completed and all of the following apply:

44 (1) Both units are created pursuant to Article 5 of this Chapter.

45 (2) Both units are located in the same county.

46 (3) The jurisdiction of the units is contiguous.

47 (4) The unit to be merged and dissolved does not directly provide sewerage
48 services to any customers.

49 (5) The unit to be merged and dissolved leases its assets to the unit with which it
50 is proposed to be merged.

51 (6) The unit to be merged and dissolved has no outstanding debts.

"§ 162A-865. Dissolution of units.

(a) Any unit may be dissolved if the dissolution is a condition of a grant from the Viable Utility Reserve as provided in Article 2 of Chapter 159G of the General Statutes. The Environmental Management Commission shall adopt a resolution transferring the assets, liabilities, and other obligations as provided for in the grant conditions imposed under Article 2 of Chapter 159G of the General Statutes.

(b) Any unit may be dissolved in order to merge that unit with any other unit, any county, any city, any consolidated city-county, any sanitary district created pursuant to Part 2 of Article 2 of Chapter 130A of the General Statutes, any joint agency created pursuant to Part 1 or Part 5 of Article 20 of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes, or any joint agency that was created by agreement between two cities and towns to operate an airport pursuant to G.S. 63-56 and that provided drinking water and wastewater services off the airport premises before January 1, 1995, and establish a new entity created under the General Statutes, on approval by the Environmental Management Commission, upon consultation with the Department of Environmental Quality and the Local Government Commission. The Environmental Management Commission may adopt a resolution transferring the assets, liabilities, and other obligations to the new entity and dissolving the unit as provided for in this Article, if the Environmental Management Commission deems the merger in the best interest of the people of the State.

"§ 162A-870. Effective date of merger or dissolution.

Upon the adoption of a resolution of merger or dissolution by the Environmental Management Commission as provided in this Article, the effective date for merger and dissolution shall be fixed as of June 30 following the adoption of the resolution or the second June 30 following the adoption of the resolution.

"§ 162A-875. Effect of merger or dissolution.

(a) Upon adoption of the resolution of merger or dissolution by the Environmental Management Commission, all of the following shall apply on the effective date set forth in the resolution:

- (1) All property, real, personal, and mixed, including accounts receivable, belonging to the dissolving unit shall be transferred, disposed of, or otherwise accounted for as provided in the resolution of merger or dissolution.
- (2) All judgments, liens, rights of liens, and causes of action of any nature in favor of the dissolving unit shall vest in and remain and inure to the benefit of the merged district.
- (3) All taxes, assessments, sewer charges, and any other debts, charges, or fees owing to the dissolving unit shall be owed to and collected as provided in the resolution of merger or dissolution.
- (4) All actions, suits, and proceedings pending against, or having been instituted by, the dissolving unit shall not be abated by merger, but all such actions, suits, and proceedings shall be continued and completed in the same manner as if merger had not occurred, and the merged entity shall be a party to all such actions, suits, and proceedings in the place and stead of the dissolving unit and shall pay or cause to be paid any judgments rendered against the dissolving unit in any such actions, suits, or proceedings. No new process is required to be served in any such action, suit, or proceeding.
- (5) All obligations of the dissolving unit, including outstanding indebtedness, shall be assumed as provided in the resolution of merger or dissolution, and all such obligations and outstanding indebtedness shall constitute obligations and indebtedness as provided in the resolution of merger or dissolution.
- (6) All ordinances, rules, regulations, and policies of the dissolving unit shall continue in full force and effect until repealed or amended by the governing body of the merged entity.

1 (7) The dissolving unit shall be abolished and shall no longer be constituted a
2 public body or a body politic and corporate, except for purposes of carrying
3 into effect the provisions and intent of this section.

4 (8) Governance of the district shall be as specified in the resolution of merger or
5 dissolution, which may be amended by the Environmental Management
6 Commission, as needed.

7 (b) All governing boards and district boards are authorized to take the actions and execute
8 the documents necessary to effectuate the provisions and intent of this section."

9 **SECTION 3.** Article 20 of Chapter 160A of the General Statutes is amended by
10 adding a new Part to read:

11 "Part 5. Water and Wastewater Systems.

12 "§ 160A-481.1. Definitions.

13 The words defined in this section shall have the meanings indicated when used in this Part:

14 (1) Local government unit. – Defined in G.S. 159G-20.

15 (2) Undertaking. – Defined in G.S. 160A-460.

16 (3) Unit of local government. – Defined in G.S. 160A-460.

17 "§ 160A-481.2. Interlocal cooperation authorized.

18 Interlocal cooperation, as provided in Part 1 of this Article, is authorized between any local
19 government unit and any other unit of local government in this State for any purpose. When two
20 or more local government units agree to contract for one or more undertakings under this Part,
21 the provisions of Part 1 of this Article apply."

22 **SECTION 4.** The Department of Environmental Quality shall study the statutes and
23 rules governing subbasin transfers and make recommendations as to whether the statutes and
24 rules should be amended. The study shall specifically examine whether transfers of water
25 between subbasins within the same major river basin should continue to be required to comply
26 with all of the same requirements under G.S. 143-215.22L as transfers of water between major
27 river basins. In conducting this study, the Department shall consider whether the costs of
28 complying with specific requirements, including financial costs and time, are justified by the
29 benefits of the requirements, including the production of useful information and public notice
30 and involvement. No later than October 1, 2020, the Department of Environmental Quality shall
31 report its findings and recommendations to the Environmental Review Commission.

32 **SECTION 5.** The Department of State Treasurer shall study and make
33 recommendations as to the feasibility of authorizing historical charters for units of local
34 government that have become, or are on the brink of becoming, defunct. The study shall
35 specifically examine whether these historical charters are needed, the impact of these charters on
36 the bond rating of the State and its political subdivisions, and the consequences of these historical
37 charters. No later than December 1, 2020, the Department of State Treasurer shall report its
38 findings and recommendations to the General Assembly.

39 **SECTION 6.** If Senate Bill 553, 2019 Regular Session, becomes law, then Section
40 14 of that act is repealed.

41
42 **PART II. FUNDING**

43 **SECTION 7.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Department of
44 Environmental Quality sufficient funds on a recurring basis for the 2020-2021 fiscal year for the
45 Viable Utility Reserve established by this act.

46
47 **PART III. GENERAL PROVISIONS**

48
49 **STATE BUDGET ACT APPLIES**

1 **SECTION 8.** The provisions of the State Budget Act, Chapter 143C of the General
2 Statutes, are reenacted and shall remain in full force and effect and are incorporated in this act
3 by reference.
4

5 **ADDITIONAL LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS**

6 **SECTION 9.** Except where expressly repealed or amended by this act, the provisions
7 of any other legislation enacted during the 2019 Regular Session of the General Assembly
8 expressly appropriating funds to an agency, a department, or an institution covered under this
9 act, shall remain in effect.
10

11 **PART IV. EFFECTIVE DATE**

12 **SECTION 10.** Sections 1 through 3 of this act become effective October 1, 2020.
13 Sections 7 through 9 of this act become effective July 1, 2020. The remainder of this act is
14 effective when it becomes law.