



City of Havre de Grace

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To: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
From: City of Havre de Grace
Date: January 29, 2020
Re: Senate Bill 219 - State Boat Act - Abandoned or Sunken Vessels - Removal
Position: Support

The City of Havre de Grace supports SB 219. The legislation would decrease the statutory timeline; the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) would have to take control of abandoned vessels and give the department more authority to mitigate such vessels when they create an environmental hazard or in the event of a declaration of a state of emergency. The City of Havre de Grace does not have the authority to remove abandoned vessels and, as such, must rely on assistance from DNR or the United States Coast Guard.

The City of Havre de Grace is a waterfront municipality located in northern Maryland with an economy that is largely dependent on its tourism and maritime industries, including daily tug and barge maritime transportation from nearby Vulcan quarry to the north. Additionally, the city government is responsible for providing over 5,000 consumers with clean drinking water pumped from the Susquehanna River then treated at its water treatment facility. The current city administration has made significant strategic investments and policy decisions in the areas of tourism and environmental stewardship that often go hand and hand, which has allowed Havre de Grace to decrease its carbon footprint and gain recognition as a 21-century city. These initiatives include modern upgrades to its water treatment facility, creating new accessible open spaces along the waterfront, running all government buildings off solar energy, creating and attracting new events, and an increase in destination marketing. The city is currently working with state lawmakers to implement an electric shuttle service that would transport visitors around the city in an environmentally responsible manner.

Unfortunately, all too often, the city is blighted with abandoned vessels off its shoreline that are not only eyesores but are navigational menaces and environmentally hazardous. Frequently these vessels can be found near the city's main water intake supply lines, which draw from the Susquehanna river to make drinking water. This area is also in eyesight from the city's downtown business district, including several waterfront restaurants.

As a result, these vessels are counterproductive to the policies of the city and create the following issues:

- Concerns from citizens about the threat the toxic materials leaking from abandoned vessels have on the safety of their drinking water.
- Environmental hazards to the ecology of the Susquehanna River and the Chesapeake Bay.
- Unwanted attention and undesirable media.
- A negative impact on the city's economy and the community at large.
- Potential navigational problems for the city's maritime and recreational boating economic sectors.

If passed, this legislation would give DNR the authority they need to mitigate abandoned vessels and would more closely align the policies of the City of Havre de Grace with the Annotated Code of Maryland. The City of Havre de Grace is asking the committee to give SB 219 a favorable report.