



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

Senate Bill 254

On-site Sewage Disposal Systems – Inspections – Licensing

DATE: FEBRUARY 11, 2020

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation supports SB 254. This bill will ensure that increasingly complex septic systems are inspected by trained and licensed professionals.

One of the most expensive appliances a homeowner must deal with is the replacement of their on-site septic system. Septic systems are buried underground, and problems can go undetected for years causing health and water quality issues.

Septic systems in Maryland are currently installed or inspected by more than 4,000 contractors and public health professionals. Licenses for these activities are required in some counties, but not in others. State training certifications are required for the installation of some system types, but not all. SB 254 would establish uniform credentialing of inspectors for all systems across the State and ensure that systems are functioning as designed and permitted.

Nitrogen pollution from septic systems is a significant contributor to local and regional water quality problems. Holding these agents to consistent licensing standards will help prevent pollution and protect the Chesapeake Bay and local waterways. The State of Maryland has approximately 420,000 septic systems, with about 52,000 located inside the Critical Area.¹ In some areas, septic system effluent ranges from 15% to nearly 40% of a county's total nitrogen load to the Bay. State licensure is a reasonable step toward preventing the significant negative impacts that poorly functioning septic systems can have on water quality and public health in Maryland's waterways.

For these reasons, CBF urges a favorable report on SB 254 from the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Dan Johannes, Agriculture Coordinator, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, at 482.268.8816 or djohannes@cbf.org.

¹Maryland Department of Environment Maryland's Nitrogen-Reducing Septic Upgrade Program
<https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/Water/BayRestorationFund/OnsiteDisposalSystems/Pages/index.aspx>

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