



Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 254 – Environment – On-Site Sewage Disposal Systems – Inspection Licenses

February 11, 2020

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB254 – *prohibiting a person from engaging in the business of inspection of an on-site sewage disposal system unless the person holds a license issued by the Department of the Environment*– on behalf of ShoreRivers. ShoreRivers is a river protection group on Maryland’s Eastern Shore with 3,500 members. Our mission is to protect and restore our Eastern Shore waterways through science-based advocacy, restoration and education.

The waterways of the eastern shore have some of the most waterfront throughout the entire Chesapeake Bay and the majority of that waterfront is developed with residential units using septic systems to manage their sewer waste. The unique sandy soils and high water tables on the Eastern Shore leave the waters of this region susceptible to pollution from failing septic systems. Nutrient and bacterial pollution can cause algal blooms, dead zones, or areas closed to swimming or shellfish harvest.

I recently became a homeowner with a septic system in Talbot County in 2018. We did have the system inspected prior to sale, and we were told that the system was functioning properly and efficiently. Within a few months however, our dog became ill and we invited Maryland Department of the Environment to look at the system to see if there was a connection. The Department of the Environment informed us that we should not have pets or children in our yard and that our system had multiple issues that should have been found during inspection. As a Maryland resident and environmental advocate, **I was disappointed to learn that our state does not have higher requirements for septic inspectors.**

Requiring septic inspectors to obtain a license from the Department of the Environment will ensure that this situation will not occur in the future. Failing systems will be found and remediated in a more timely manner, benefiting both human and environmental health. Inspections during property transfers is one of the few opportunities the state has to identify septic related pollution sources. **As these home’s on-site sewage disposal systems are inspected or installed in the future, it’s critical that it is done by trained, licensed professionals.** ShoreRivers is a strong proponent for policies that help to address pollution coming from septic systems. For the reason and the examples described above, ShoreRivers urges the committee to adopt **Senate Bill 254.**

Sincerely,
Elle Bassett, Miles-Wye Riverkeeper on behalf of:

ShoreRivers

Jeff Horstman, Executive Director

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