



House Bill 407

On-Site Sewage Disposal Systems - Inspection - Licensing

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**
WITH AMENDMENTS

To: Environment and Transportation
Committee

Date: January 27, 2021

From: Alex Butler

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS HB 407 WITH AMENDMENTS**. The bill would require the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to create an onsite wastewater property transfer license and training requirements for septic system inspectors. Stakeholder amendments would clarify and improve the bill's advances toward these goals.

For homes with a septic or other on-site sewage disposal system, a proper inspection is critical as a failing system can cost a homebuyer thousands or tens of thousands of dollars in repairs, and could result in groundwater contamination or other environmental damages. Currently, there are few standards in place regarding inspector training and the only recourse a homebuyer has against a bad inspection is the costly option of taking the inspector to court. MACo, in consultation with county environmental health directors, is aware of instances where inspectors with little or no training signed off on a septic system that was clearly failing or in need of major repairs.

Due to this systemic problem, MACo believes that licensing and training requirements are needed for inspectors. MACo has worked with the bill's sponsor, stakeholders, and county environmental health directors on amendments to clarify and correct some of the bill's provisions, including the establishment of appropriate financial penalties. Any penalties collected by MDE would go into the septic account of the Bay Restoration Fund. Additionally, counties believe that the regulations adopted in relation to licensing inspectors should be made by the Department to allow them to effectively license inspectors without overburdening the industry.

HB 407 would address the systemic issue of improper septic inspections by transfer inspectors by requiring MDE to establish reasonable licensing and training requirements. For these reasons, MACo requests the Committee give HB 407 a report of **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**.