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—
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Subcommittees
Chair, Environment
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The Maryland House of Delegates
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The Maryland House of Delegates
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support

HB 407 On-Site Sewage Disposal System – Inspection – Licensing

Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

HB 407 is similar to a bill you already heard this year—HB 302—that bill sets up a licensing board for the whole septic or Onsite Wastewater industry. This bill focuses on the On-Site Wastewater Property Transfer Inspectors. These are the individuals who inspect a home's septic system when the house is being sold. This is the best time to discover and fix any problems with a septic system, so having a well-trained inspector is important.

Currently, the only training that an inspector needs to have is to take a MDE-approved course. But MDE does not require inspectors to actually follow any of the course's recommendations for inspections.

That leads to a lot of variability in the quality of inspections. Some inspectors will only flush a toilet and look around outside to see if they smell or observe a problem. Others follow the MDE recommendations and open up the system, put cameras in the unit and, in some cases, even dig up parts of the system to be sure it is working correctly.

Given the differences among procedures used by inspectors and the differences in septic systems, it's important to improve the training of inspectors. That's what this bill will do.

HB 407 will improve the MDE course, require training and licensing, ensure that the proper inspections are followed, and require that a detailed written report is provided to the homebuyer. It also sets up an enforcement process and penalties.

MACO, Environmental Health Officers, septic professionals, environmentalists, and the Maryland Association of Realtors all support this bill. Everyone agrees that the problems with the inspectors are urgent and they should be licensed immediately while the larger Septic Board gets organized.

Last year this bill passed the Senate but ran out of time for House action.

HB 407 protects homeowners and prevents contamination of wells and streams. Passing HB407 is good for consumers, health, and the environment

Legislation Details:

- Requires anyone who performs an inspection at the time of sale to be licensed by MDE and to perform the inspection according to requirements set by MDE.
- Starting in 2022, an individual must be licensed and follow MDE standards for inspections.
- By January 2022, MDE will have these requirements established and the training will include methods to determine whether the septic system needs replacement or repair and whether it is in compliance with regulations. In addition, MDE will provide a specific format for an inspection to take place.
- The licensee must pay a fee established by MDE.