

Gene von Gunten

HB 407: On-Site Sewage Disposal Systems-Inspection-Licensing

House Environment and Transportation

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Position: Support

My name is Gene von Gunten. I live near Westminster, MD in Carroll County. I am retired after working 38 years in local environmental health, for the Frederick County Health Department and the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services. I retired as the manager of the Well & Septic Section at MCDPS. My entire career was devoted to serving homeowners with water well and septic system issues.

Early in 1995 I met a young couple who purchased their dream home in the rural hamlet of Boyds, MD. This was an older home outside the reach of any public sewer system. The new owners did their due diligence, hiring a private septic inspector who gave their system a clean bill of health. Unfortunately, it was soon discovered that their "system" was a pipe that discharged wastewater directly into a nearby stream. It turns out the inspector had no formal training and failed to inspect the property carefully.

As we helped them through the process of obtaining approval for a proper septic system, with a cost over \$30,000, I met their attorney. Brian Frosh, local attorney and State Delegate, was keen to propose legislation to bring septic inspectors to a professional level. The Frosh bill was enacted in 1999, but opposition to the bill resulted in a "watered down" version that proved helpful but only to a limited degree.

HB 407 would restore the majority of Frosh's original concept. Private inspectors with professional training and licensure. The people that rely upon these inspections will benefit greatly. Private inspectors who are contentious and committed to their craft welcome this legislation. Those who would conduct flawed and improper inspections will not. Local health departments, long burdened with being the "de facto" referee in so many of these property transactions, will be relieved of that duty.

A good model here are professional home inspectors. They adhere to a well-established code of ethics; and provide a valuable service for home buyers and sellers. We can help private septic inspectors reach a similar stature. I know the Attorney General supports this Bill and I hope we can fulfill his vision. Thank you.