



# CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

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*Environmental Protection and Restoration  
Environmental Education*

## **House Bill 198**

Wastewater Treatment Plants – Water Quality Testing and Sewage Overflow  
and Pipeline Breakage Notification  
(Environmental Accountability Act of 2023)

Date: February 8, 2023  
To: House Environment and Transportation Committee

Position: Support  
From: Doug Myers  
Maryland Senior Scientist

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Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** HB 198 which requires independent third party oversight of water quality monitoring, testing, lab analysis and reporting for wastewater treatment plants that have catastrophic failures or significant reporting violations.

Recent failures at major wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) in Baltimore and St. Mary's County illustrate the risk of self-reporting when internal plant operations are deficient coupled with poor oversight by the Maryland Department of the Environment. The discharge of partially treated wastewater, severe exceedances of permit limits for nitrogen reversing progress on the state's Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) for the Chesapeake and contaminated shellfish made headlines, embarrassed the state, and resulted in costly fines, court cases, and remedial action. Back River WWTP is just recently, as a result of months of such third party oversight by Maryland Environmental Service, complying with its permit limits. Patapsco WWTP continues to struggle with sludge processing and biosolids handling.

The stopgap measure recommended by HB 198 is welcome policy to prevent such occurrences in the future. Our investments through the Bay Restoration Fund in facility upgrades to Enhanced Nutrient Removal are working to help clean up the bay. But these gains are tenuous if poor plant operation, maintenance, reporting, and oversight are allowed to continue.

### **CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on HB 198.**

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney at [mstegman@cbf.org](mailto:mstegman@cbf.org).

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 300,000 members and e-subscribers, including over 109,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.