

**Mathew Geckle
Vice President
Back River Pre Cast**

**HB 245 Department of the Environment – Fees, Penalties, Funding, and
Regulation
House Environment and Transportation Committee
January 31, 2024**

Position Support with Amendment

I am pleased to support Maryland Department of the Environment's request to charge fees for septic system permits if the agency is the one doing the septic permitting work for a local government.

As this committee knows well both MDE and local governments are understaffed and have been underfunded for too long. This is taking a toll on the remaining staff, resulting in long waits for permits and, importantly, and harming Marylander's health and environment. When MDE must step in and help a local jurisdiction with permitting it needs to be paid for that work through the permitting fees.

This bill takes some steps needed to fund agencies appropriately, and I support these steps wholeheartedly and urge their passage. It is important to note however that this bill is missing two important tools.

1. Allow MDE and local jurisdictions to assess administrative penalties when septic system is not fixed in a timely matter. This provided a swifter and easier course of action to hold polluters accountable than the current civil penalty provisions.
2. Set penalties at a higher rate to be a real deterrent to pollution. Sadly, paying a low fine can be preferable to fixing broken septic systems.

With these additions I urge a favorable report