



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

House Bill 922

State Government - Public Welfare Actions - Determinations and Settlements

Date: February 21, 2024
To: Judiciary Committee

Position: **Favorable**
From: Matt Stegman
MD Staff Attorney

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** House Bill 922, which empowers the Attorney General of Maryland to negotiate settlements in public welfare actions that are proportional to a defendant's liability. Current Maryland law makes it difficult to settle complex cases involving many defendants who have varying levels of culpability. This bill is based in basic principles of fairness and brings Maryland into line with federal law and the laws of many of our peer states.

Public welfare actions brought by the Attorney General can be a tremendous tool for protecting the health of Maryland's natural resources, including the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Often times, the communities that bear the greatest cost of environmental degradation are overburdened and underserved communities where resources are badly needed. SB 680 would encourage timely settlement of public welfare actions, ending harmful practices and bringing in resources to remediate harms sooner.

HB 922 is a responsible step that would allow the Attorney General to more effectively and efficiently use his authority to protect Marylanders. Importantly, the bill does not create any *new* or expanded authority for the Attorney General.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on HB 922.

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at 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 200,000 members and e-subscribers, including 71,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.