



January 31, 2024

Kim Coble
Executive Director

2024 Board of
Directors

SUPPORT: HB245 - Department of the Environment - Fees, Penalties, Funding and Regulation

Lynn Heller, Chair
The Hon. Nancy Kopp,
Treasurer
Kimberly Armstrong
Mike Davis
Candace Dodson-Reed
Verna Harrison
Melanie Hartwig-Davis
Charles Hernick
The Hon. Steve Lafferty
Patrick Miller
Bonnie L. Norman
Katherine (Kitty)
Thomas

Mr. Chair and Members of the Committee:

Maryland LCV supports HB245 - Department of the Environment - Fees, Penalties, Funding, and Regulation and we thank the Department for taking the initiative on this important issue.

In 2018 the Department of Legislative Services issued an Executive Branch Staffing Adequacy Study¹, which documented staffing inadequacies in eleven state agencies. At that time they noted that the Department had a quantifiable staffing shortage of 245 PINs including both inspectors and administrative positions. This shortage has grown over the intervening years as the demands for enforcement of environmental laws that protect our air, land, water and communities have outpaced the growth of the agency's resources. In 2022, the Maryland General Assembly passed the Climate Solutions Now Act, positioning Maryland as a national leader on greenhouse gas emissions reductions, and the resulting health and economic benefits. The responsibility for implementation of this vital legislation lands primarily on the Maryland Department of the Environment to lead and enforce.

In the 2023 budget, recognizing these challenges, the Moore Administration and the Maryland General Assembly provided funding for nine additional staff to address the increased workload. This progress did not go far enough to confront the substantial structural inadequacy of Agency funding or staffing levels. HB245 takes an important additional step in that direction by ensuring that the agency will have resources to pursue its mandate for delivering protections for the environment, especially in already overburdened and underserved areas, and supporting its ability to be responsive to calls from community members for assistance. We urge the General Assembly to continue to look for ways to increase the funding for this critical agency without adding to the tax-payer burden through ensuring that fees are sufficient to support their program administration, and penalties are sufficient to deter polluters.

The Maryland Department of the Environment has done an admirable job of reaching out to stakeholders in crafting this legislation and the result balances the critical need for additional funding through right-sizing fees with the impact of the increases on the affected industries.

Maryland LCV urges a **Favorable** report on this important bill.

¹ <https://dls.maryland.gov/pubs/prod/TaxFiscalPlan/Executive-Branch-Staffing-Adequacy-Study.pdf>