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BILL NO.: **SB 674**

TITLE: Abandoned or Sunken Vessels and Waterway Improvement Fund Grants

SPONSOR: Senator Elfreth

COMMITTEE: Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

POSITION: **SUPPORT**

DATE: February 20, 2024

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** SB674 – Abandoned or Sunken Vessels and Waterway Improvement Fund Grants. This bill would require a vessel owner to provide their mailing address, telephone number and email address as part of their vessel registration process to make contact easier, when necessary.

Abandoned vessels are increasingly plaguing the waterways in Baltimore County. Many of these vessels contain hazardous materials such as gasoline and oil, which leak into the water. In many cases, the cost of maintaining a vessel becomes onerous for an owner, so the vessel is simply left in the water or abandoned at a dock. Registration information is rarely current because state law does not require registration information to be updated when an owner moves or transfers ownership. SB674 would require more reliable information that Baltimore County Police Department's Marine Unit could use to attempt to contact the current or last known owner of a vessel. By allowing notification by email to an owner of a vessel, the hope is that it will become more difficult for an owner to simply walk away from a boat they no longer want.

In addition, SB674 authorizes the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to stand up a voluntary “turn-in” program for vessel owners to relinquish their vessel in a more responsible manner. It is our sincere hope that should this legislation pass, that DNR would move swiftly to create such a program, and work with local Marine Units to collaboratively address the growing challenge of derelict and abandoned vessels in Maryland.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on SB674 from the Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee. For more information, please contact Jenn Aiosa, Director of Government Affairs at jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov.