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STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

**45 CALVERT STREET, 3rd FLOOR
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401
410-260-7770 / 1-877-669-6085**

JENNIFER K. ALLGAIR
Executive Director
WILLIAM J. COLQUHOUN
General Counsel
KATHERINE P. THOMPSON
Staff Counsel
ANA L. HENRY
Assistant General Counsel
PANSY S. WATSON
Assistant Counsel

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House Bill 717 – Natural Resources – Public Lands – Acquisition, Staffing, Operations and Funding

Testimony Before the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

The State Ethics Commission provides this informational written testimony to explain the impact of this proposed legislation on the agency. This legislation provides for exemptions from certain conflict of interest provisions of the Public Ethics Law for agency employees serving in specific roles with the agency-affiliated foundation. The legislation, as amended, is consistent with prior legislation allowing similar exemptions for the employees of other State agencies who serve in various capacities with other agency-affiliated foundations with other State agencies such as the Maryland Stadium Authority, TEDCO, the Historic St. Mary's City Commission, and the University of Maryland Baltimore. In those instances, the exemption provisions for affiliated foundation activities are contained in the agency's specific enabling statute for the affiliated foundation rather than in the provisions of the Public Ethics Law.

As amended, HB 717 will not have a fiscal impact on the State Ethics Commission. The legislation would have a small operational impact that the agency can absorb with its current resources. The State Ethics Commission will be required to work with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to provide guidance and receive reports related to DNR officials or employees serving as an official or director of an agency affiliated foundation.