

BENJAMIN BROOKS
Legislative District 10
Baltimore County

Education, Energy, and the
Environment Committee

Energy Subcommittee

Chair, Joint Electric Universal
Service Program Workgroup



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SB 315
Maryland Environmental Service – Membership of Board of Directors –
Alterations

Ways and Means Committee
March 26, 2024

Chairman Korman, Vice-Chair Boyce, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you on SB315 - Maryland Environmental Service - Membership of Board of Directors - Alterations. The purpose of this bill is to change the composition of the Maryland Environmental Service's (MES) Board of Directors by removing the State Treasurer and replacing the role with the Secretary of the Maryland Department of Planning. This small change would lighten the burden on the State Treasurer's duties and responsibilities and ensure that the Board of Directors continues to operate smoothly.

In 2021, the legislature passed the MES Reform Act which kept MES's independent status, but reformed its governance structure, into what it is today — a seven-member Board of Directors which is confirmed by the Senate. The governance reform also added the State Treasurer to the MES Board of Directors. The Board is mainly responsible for the governance and approving contracts at MES's monthly board meetings.

The Office of the State Treasurer, despite its limited staff, took over the massive task of managing the Maryland 529 College Savings Plan. The addition of this responsibility led to several challenges pertaining to the number of boards and commissions that the State Treasurer is expected to act on. In the 2024 session, the legislature successfully passed a bill to remove the Office of the State Treasurer from four boards and commissions. Despite this adjustment, the bill kept the State Treasurer on the MES board, prompting the need for alterations.

SB315 would allow the Secretary of Planning, or their designee, to replace the State Treasurer under the same provisions in which the Treasurer currently serves. Specifically, exempting the Secretary of Planning and the Executive Director from a staggered term of four years and/or allowing them to serve as an executive officer of the board.

In order for MES to maintain continuity in protecting the environment and improve the quality of Maryland's air, land, and water, it is imperative that Board of Directors is functioning well. All parties involved, including the Governor, State Treasurer, and the Planning Secretary are supportive of this transition. SB315 aims to ensure that the Maryland Environmental Service's Board of Directors operates efficiently to promote the health and wellbeing of our environment.

For the reasons, I am requesting a favorable report on Senate Bill 315.

With kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Benjamin F. Brooks". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with a long, sweeping underline.

Benjamin Brooks