



**2020 SESSION
POSITION PAPER**

BILL: HB 1484 – State Board of Environmental Health Specialists – Fees – General Fund
COMMITTEE: Appropriations Committee
POSITION: Letter of Support
BILL ANALYSIS: HB 1484 would move the State Board of Environmental Health Specialists (BEHS) out of the Special Fund category and back into the General Fund category. This would enable the BEHS to maintain its existence and continue supporting their oversight and licensing work of the profession.

POSITION RATIONALE: The Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO) **supports HB 1484** to repeal the existing State Board of Environmental Health Specialist Fund and direct future monies collected into the State General Fund.

Environmental health regulation, enforcement and the ultimate protection of the public's health, is conducted largely by the Local Public Health Departments (LHDs) located in each jurisdiction in the state. Within each LHD, this critical work is done by Licensed Environmental Health Specialists (LEHS). This is a relatively small, but very specialized group of professionals who are responsible for implementing and overseeing health and environmental regulation and programs delegated to the LHDs by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), in addition to enforcing regulations and programs unique to specific jurisdictions. This work includes, but is not limited to, ensuring safe drinking water, prepared food served at food service facilities, safe and healthy recreational venues, and preventing and abating rabies, vector borne illnesses, nuisances and much more. These essential public health functions rest solely with these trained LEHS.

The Board of Environmental Health Specialists (Board) represents LEHS and ensures a high-level of competence and professionalism among its limited membership of 550 LEHS. The Board processes applications, approves and oversees training requirements, addresses complaints, makes disciplinary determinations and more. In July 2012, when the Board was moved to the MDH Boards and Commissions, the Board was also moved out of general funds and into special funding. This has created a significant financial hardship. The limited membership base of 550 LEHS does not generate sufficient revenue to support its on-going and increasing operational costs. This results in undue risk and threatens the Board's existence. MACHO believes that the ability to maintain and sustain the Board with adequate funding to meet existing balance shortfalls can best be achieved with the move out of a special fund obligation, and into a general fund payment and support structure. This Board is critical to sustainability of LHD staffing.

For these reasons, the Maryland Association of County Health Officers submits this **letter of support for HB 1484**. For more information, please contact Ruth Maiorana, MACHO Executive Director at rmaioral@jhu.edu or 410-614-6891. *This communication reflects the position of MACHO.*