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Judicial Proceedings Committee

Vice Chair, Baltimore County
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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky
2 West Miller Senate Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401-1991

RE: SB 671 – Bay Restoration Fund – Allocation of Fees, Authorized Uses, and County Authority to Incur Indebtedness

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Committee:

I am proud to introduce Senate Bill 671, which will provide additional options for the funding of costs for repairing and replacing septic systems by utilizing Bay Restoration Fund money. There are over 420,000 on-site sewage disposal systems in Maryland. These are popularly known as septic systems. It is estimated that 10% of them are failing and are not adequately treating sewage. Like most appliances and other vital residential systems, septic systems experience increasing problems as they get older, including clogs, leaks and broken pipes. Systems that are no longer working properly can result in the contamination of nearby streams and the pollution of wells. Ultimately, as water travels downhill, the contamination and pollution ends up in the Bay. Further, as large numbers of septic systems fail, issues can arise such as algae blooms in creeks and waterways, the closure of shellfish harvesting grounds and bans on contact with polluted water.

Senate Bill 671 will enable counties to issue bonds supported by the Bay Restoration Fund money. This will mean that the counties will have the option to receive a large insurance of cash up front which they can use to fix failing county septic systems right away. I have offered an amendment which will strike all of the changes made by the bill through the middle of page 5. Concurrently, I am also proposing an amendment that will require MDE to hold on to 10% of the septic funds for emergency repairs. Currently funds are often exhausted a few months after they are sent to the counties. This will provide for an emergency fund in case of serious issues that arise.

Senate Bill 671 does not affect overall State Bay Restoration Fund revenues but will enable counties to use bonding power to quickly obtain significant money that they can use for septic system upgrades and connections. I ask the committee for a favorable report.