



City of Havre de Grace

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To: Environment and Transportation

From: City of Havre de Grace

Date: February 12, 2020

Re: House Bill 504 - Maryland Boat Act - Abandoned and Sunken Vessels

Position: Support

The legislation would add to the definition of “abandoned or sunken vessel” vessels that have “remained moored or anchored in waters of the state for more than 30 days and is in such a condition of disrepair that the vessel will not keep afloat with ordinary care.”

The City of Havre de Grace is a waterfront municipality located in northern Maryland with an economy that is largely dependent on its tourism and maritime industries, including daily tug and barge maritime transportation from nearby Vulcan quarry to the north. Additionally, the city government is responsible for providing over 5,000 consumers with clean drinking water pumped from the Susquehanna River then treated at its water treatment facility. The current city administration has made significant strategic investments and policy decisions in the areas of tourism and environmental stewardship that often go hand and hand, which has allowed Havre de Grace to decrease its carbon footprint and gain recognition as a 21-century city. These initiatives include modern upgrades to its water treatment facility, creating new accessible open spaces along the waterfront, running all government buildings off solar energy, creating and attracting new events, and an increase in destination marketing. The city is currently working with state lawmakers to implement an electric shuttle service that would transport visitors around the city in an environmentally responsible manner.

Unfortunately, all too often, the city is blighted with abandoned vessels off its shoreline that are not only eyesores but are navigational menaces and environmentally hazardous. Frequently these vessels can be found near the city's main water intake supply lines, which draw from the Susquehanna river to make drinking water. This area is also in eyesight from the city's downtown business district, including several waterfront restaurants.

As a result, these vessels are counterproductive to the policies of the city and create the following issues:

- Concerns from citizens about the threat the toxic materials leaking from abandoned vessels have on the safety of their drinking water.
- Environmental hazards to the ecology of the Susquehanna River and the Chesapeake Bay.
- Unwanted attention and undesirable media.
- A negative impact on the city's economy and the community at large.
- Potential navigational problems for the city's maritime and recreational boating economic sectors.

If passed, this legislation would give DNR greater authority to mitigate abandoned vessels and would more closely align the policies of the City of Havre de Grace with the Annotated Code of Maryland. The City of Havre de Grace is asking the committee to give HB 504 favorable report.