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**BILL NO.:**           **HB 177**

**TITLE:**             Environment - Water Infrastructure Assets - Authorization of  
Emergency Actions and Establishment of Emergency Reserve

**SPONSOR:**         Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee

**COMMITTEE:**      Environment and Transportation

**POSITION:**       **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS**

**DATE:**             February 18, 2020

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS WITH AMENDMENTS** House Bill 177 – Environment - Water Infrastructure Assets - Authorization of Emergency Actions and Establishment of Emergency Reserve. This bill authorizes the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to take emergency actions to protect life, property, or the environment against risk arising from water infrastructure assets, funded by a reserve account in the Bay Restoration Fund.

Dams, reservoirs, and stormwater pollution have the potential to severely impact the quality of life for Baltimore County’s residents. Baltimore County understands the benefits functioning water infrastructure assets provide when run properly, and the destruction they reap when in disrepair. This bill would further the County’s policy goals by providing crucial assistance from MDE if an asset is in need of emergency repair.

The County feels, however, that this bill could be strengthened with adjustments. The County benefits from competitive grants for sanitary sewer, septic system, and stormwater projects. We are concerned that the Water Infrastructure Emergency Reserve would reduce available funds by up to \$10 million per year that have been indispensable for improving and maintaining our public systems. Furthermore, certain procedures outlined in the bill are unclear. Specifically, the County would like the language to specify which repairs qualify for being referred to the MDE, what actions must be taken by the County prior to referral, and if any emergency actions will be delegated to the County.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report on HB 177. For more information, please contact Chuck Conner, Chief Legislative Officer, at 443-900-6582.

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