



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

House Bill 689

Maryland Environmental Policy Act - Consistency With National Environmental Policy Act

DATE: FEBRUARY 21, 2020
SUPPORT

POSITION:

Chesapeake Bay Foundation SUPPORTS HB 689. This legislation would fix criteria for Maryland Environmental Policy Act reviews to the standards for the National Environmental Policy Act as they exist on January 1, 2020. The Maryland Environmental Policy Act requires environmental review of requests by State agencies to change their authorities.

Recent moves by the Trump Administration may be designed to unravel the basic protection of environmental review which has served as the protective cover against assaults on human health and the environment for decades. This bill acknowledges that administrative decisions may weaken enforcement of federal review and instruct Maryland Department of the Environment to maintain the current level of scrutiny regardless the federal government's approach.

Since its founding in 1972, the US Environmental Protection Agency has been responsible for administration of the National Environmental Policy Act. This Act requires the EPA to review proposed actions by other federal agencies and identify and recommend appropriate measures to avoid and mitigate significant environmental impacts associated with the proposals.

Many States, including Maryland, have implemented state-level review processes based on the National Environmental Policy Act standards and procedures. The Maryland Environmental Policy Act is generally limited to review of changes in agency authority. This legislation's requirement that state-level review is consistent with the national standard, pinpointed to the date of January 2020, is a prudent precaution against backsliding review. Continued standard application of the Maryland Environmental Policy Act in this State is important to environmental protection and for consistency for the regulated community.

For these reasons, CBF urges a FAVORABLE report on HB 689 from the House Environment and Transportation Committee. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Doug Myers, Maryland Senior Scientist at (443)-482-2168 or dmyers@cbf.org

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 300,000 members and e-subscribers, including over 107,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.