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Health and Government Operations  
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Government Operations  
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Public Health and  
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**February 26, 2020**

**House Bill 854**

**Department of the Environment – Non-tidal Wetlands – Study of Vernal Pools**

Dear Chairman Barve, Vice Chair Stein, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

Vernal pools are a specialized category of non-tidal wetlands that are typically water-filled from early winter through mid-summer. They are unique, small-scale ecosystems that contribute significantly to the biodiversity of Maryland by providing habitat for species that cannot reproduce in alternative habitats, such as the wood frog, mole salamanders, and fairy shrimp. Vernal pools are also important because they provide a significant amount of ecosystem services as they occur frequently throughout Maryland and have the capacity to replenish groundwater and filter storm water flows. Unfortunately, vernal pools are threatened due to limited knowledge of their seasonal presence. This bill would help to correct this problem.

HB854 would require the Department of the Environment to do the following:

- Study vernal pools in the State
- Complete an inventory of vernal pools, including number and location
- Identify particular protection and management measures, including creating new, and replacing lost or degraded pools
- Improve the biodiversity of vernal pools
- Make recommendations addressing the protection and management measures
- Report to the Governor and the General Assembly by October 1, 2021

Helping vernal pools to grow and thrive have advantages both ecologically and environmentally. As legislators, we are responsible for enacting laws that keep our air and water cleaner, and our environment healthier. By passing HB854, we will be taking a step towards assisting the continuing biodiversity of Maryland.

I respectfully request a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Terri Hill'.

Terri Hill, M.D.