



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

House Bill 866

General Assembly - Environmental Impact Statements - Pilot Program

DATE: FEBRUARY 24, 2020

POSITION: SUPPORT

Chesapeake Bay Foundation SUPPORTS HB 866. This legislation establishes a pilot program under which the Department of Legislative Services must prepare an environmental impact statement for a bill referred to the Public Utilities Subcommittee of the House Economic Matters Committee, the Business Regulation Subcommittee of the House Economic Matters Committee, or the Energy and Public Utilities Subcommittee of the Senate Finance Committee of the General Assembly.

Fiscal notes have the potential to provide critical context to understanding the breadth of impacts of legislation introduced in the General Assembly. By requiring analysis of the environmental impacts of energy-related legislation, a fiscal note may reveal or highlight connections between energy policy and the environment. As the effects of climate change on the natural world become more widespread, environmental analysis of energy policy decisions increases in relevance.

Climate change has immediate and drastic impacts on the Chesapeake Bay, many of which are already being witnessed. Warmer climates mean warmer waters, which decrease dissolved oxygen, exacerbating the Bay's fish-killing "dead zones" and contributing to algal blooms. Rising water temperatures stress fish and reducing the populations from the Bay's iconic striped bass to brook trout. Other temperature-sensitive species such as eel grass, a critical habitat plant, are at risk.

This bill seeks reasonable consideration for the environmental impacts of energy and public utilities-related legislation. Federal efforts to reverse progress on air pollution from incineration have increased the role states must now play in addressing energy policy. Without strong state-level action on climate change, environmental progress, including progress on the Chesapeake Bay Blueprint, is at risk.

For these reasons, CBF urges a FAVORABLE report on HB 866 from the Rules and Executive Nominations Committee. If you have any questions, feel free to contact Robin Clark Eilenberg, Maryland Staff Attorney at 443.482.2165 or reilenberg@cbf.org

Maryland Office • Philip Merrill Environmental Center • 6 Herndon Avenue • Annapolis • Maryland • 21403
Phone (410) 268-8816 • Fax (410) 280-3513

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.