

EMILY SHETTY
Legislative District 18
Montgomery County

Judiciary Committee



Annapolis Office
The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 224
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3181 · 301-858-3181
800-492-7122 Ext. 3181
Emily.Shetty@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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**HB866 - General Assembly - Environmental Impact Statements - Pilot Program
Statement in SUPPORT**

Chair Healey, Vice-Chair Holmes and members of the House Rules Committee, thank you for the opportunity today to testify in support of HB866.

The intent of this bill is to provide a one-year pilot program that would allow certain subcommittees that engage on some of our most consequential legislation that impacts the environment to collect information and data on the environmental impact of these bills during deliberation. As drafted, the bill would require certain subcommittees to obtain an environmental impact statement prior to movement on certain bills, unless the chair waives this due to need to move the bill promptly to conduct legislative business. Unfortunately in the quick sprint to draft and introduce the bill, the language did not come out quite as intended, and so I have submitted a sponsor amendment request that would instead provide the Chair of the relevant standing committees the option to request such a statement for bills that may have an environmental impact that might not be immediately apparent. Essentially, instead of an opt-out requirement, the bill as amended will be opt-in, allowing the Chair additional opportunities to seek what I hope will be helpful information while the committee does its important work. The bill also authorizes DLS to consult with relevant agencies and outside experts who can assist in providing this analysis promptly.

As drafted, this one year pilot program would only affect legislation considered by the Public Utilities subcommittee and Business Regulation subcommittee of the House Economic Matters committee, and Energy and Public Utilities subcommittee of Senate Finance. We selected these subcommittees because the work before them is so critical and may have an impact on our environment that is not immediately apparent. Having information about the potential environmental impact of the legislation would help provide additional background information for legislators as we deliberate the bills before us.

Members of this committee may recall a similar bill I introduced last year which would have required a similar environmental impact statement as part of every fiscal note for all bills being considered before the general assembly. That bill received a very large fiscal note, and the helpful feedback we received from DLS was that in part the note was high because they would have to hire staff to help conduct this analysis as they do not currently have the expertise to do this. The bill before you this session is a much smaller version, focused on the bills most impactful to our environment where the environmental impact may not be immediately apparent,

and to address cost concerns from DLS, authorizes the committee to work with outside experts like the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Studies.

The threat of climate change is real, and Maryland has a long history of leading the nation in strong environmental policies. Including information about the environmental impact of pending legislation will give us one additional tool to weigh the long term effects of the important policies that we are considering.

Respectfully, I ask for a favorable report on HB866.