

Gene von Gunten

HB878 Bay Restoration Fund

House Appropriations Committee

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Position: Support

My name is Gene von Gunten. I live near Westminster, MD in Carroll County. I retired after working 38 years in local environmental health, for the Frederick County Health Department and the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services. I was the manager of the Well & Septic Section at MCDPS. My entire career was devoted to serving homeowners with water well and septic system issues.

I would like to testify in support of House Bill 878. Every County in Maryland is struggling to deal with a growing number of failing septic systems. Many of the homes built during the 1960's and 1970's are experiencing septic failures. As we work with homeowners to replace these systems, we must be cognizant of the receiving environment- if we are going to protect the health of the Chesapeake Bay and our groundwater. This means many of these systems require expensive pre-treatment and expensive dispersal systems. These systems are typically designed by professionals and carry greater installation costs.

Many homeowners are simply unable to afford these expensive upgrades. The BRF has helped many shoulder these costs, but most Counties exhaust their allotted funds before the year ends. This leaves many homeowners in need of funding that does not exist. HB 878 creates a mechanism whereby Counties can leverage their funds and borrow funds to help many additional homeowners.

I can tell you the costs associated with enforcement are far greater than the costs to administer these programs; and the benefits to homeowners are substantial. Let's help expand the BRF for many more Maryland homeowners.