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**SB701 – Bay Restoration Fund – County Authority to Incur Indebtedness
Education Health and Environmental Affairs
March 4, 2021**

POSITION: IN FAVOR

SB 701 will help property owners afford costly repairs to their septic systems. These can cost up to \$75,000.00 with \$25,000.00 the average cost to repair a system. There are approximately 450,000 septic systems in Maryland and the EPA estimates 10% fail every year. I can attest that over the last year my calls for failing septic systems have skyrocketed. The combination of aging systems, poor design, or installation increased heavy rains and people home instead of work or school has played havoc on septic systems. The typical response from property owners is I do not know where I am going to get the money to pay for this needed repair.

SB 701 is just another tool for counties to get failing septic systems repaired to protect public and environmental health. Currently the Bay Restoration Fund (BRF) will pay for the installation of a MDE approved BAT system (septic tank) and in some cases the dispersal system (drainfield, mound or drip system) for very low-income people. HB 878 will allow counties to use their BRF allocation to purchase bonds to provide low interest loans or grants to for the repair cost of their failing septic system providing a MDE approved BAT is included in the repair.

The BRF does pay for the cost a BAT system, but it does not pay for all the other costs of the repair which could be up to \$60,000.00 in additional cost. SB 701 provides a solution for property owners to afford the significant cost of repairing their septic system. This bill only enables counties to use BRF money to purchase bonds. It does not require or mandate the counties to do so. The decision if this is best use of a counties BRF allocation is up to the county.

As a fiscal conservative, SB701 meets all the requirements of a good bill. SB701 uses existing funds, will not divert funds away from other use, is not a requirement and will help property owners in a time of need.

I urge a favorable report.

Matthew Geckle
Vice-President

