



Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Josh Kurtz, Secretary
Allan Fisher, Deputy Secretary

March 9, 2023

BILL NUMBER: House Bill 874 – First Reader

**SHORT TITLE: Office of the Attorney General – Environment and Natural Resources
Monitoring Unit – Establishment**

DEPARTMENT’S POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION

EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT’S POSITION:

The Department provides the following information on House Bill 874.

The Department is supportive of this general concept. The Department currently works with the Environmental Crimes Unit of the Office of the Attorney General on some complex and multi-jurisdictional criminal natural resources cases. Having additional attorney support to expand the capacity to assist with such cases would be helpful. The Department also recognizes the potential benefit of staff attorneys who could assist the Department in the initial development, investigation and overall support for important wildlife and fisheries crimes. A team of in-house attorneys with expertise on hunting and fishing violations and underlying ecological or social purposes could be beneficial to the Department. The bill discusses this new unit as assisting with policy and legal advice generally. The Department relies on current Attorney General staff which are assigned to the agency to provide legal advice, but policy is determined by the agency. Eliminating the reference to the new unit providing policy advice, or specifying that the advice provided by this new unit would be confined to enforcement policy linked to improving prosecution is preferred.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Office of the Attorney General currently has an Environmental Crimes unit that assists with some criminal prosecutions.

BILL EXPLANATION:

The bill would create an Environmental and Natural Resources Monitoring Unit in the Office of the Attorney General.