



Kim Coble
Executive Director

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Support SB611 - Office of the Attorney General - Environment and Natural Resources Monitoring Unit - Establishment

Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee:

Maryland LCV supports SB611, and we thank Senator Bailey for his leadership, and his commitment to environmental enforcement.

This bill creates a special unit within the Attorney General's office to prosecute environmental and natural resources crimes and provide support to Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) in investigating civil suits.

As outlined by our partners at the Chesapeake Accountability Project, between 2017 and 2020, nearly three quarters of Maryland's industrial facilities were not in compliance with their stormwater permits, yet formal enforcement actions were taken against less than 1 percent of sites found out of compliance. The lack of follow-up enforcement action after a finding of noncompliance was attributed to the lack of available resources and capacity at MDE. Lack of enforcement of MDE permit terms places the fragile recovery of the Chesapeake Bay at risk and sends a message to permittees that noncompliance is an acceptable outcome to permit violations.

Lack of enforcement capacity for non-compliance is especially damaging to communities already overburdened by pollution. Providing additional resources will assist agencies with prosecution of criminal cases and mitigation of damages through civil suits would help increase the capacity of the agencies to carry out meaningful enforcement.

Maryland LCV urges a favorable report on this important bill.