



Maryland

Department of the Environment

Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor

Serena McIlwain, Secretary
Suzanne E. Dorsey, Deputy Secretary

March 30, 2023

The Honorable Kumar Barve, Chair
Environment and Transportation Committee
House Office Building, Room 251
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Re: Senate Bill 830 – Environmental Health Specialists and On-Site Sewage Disposal Systems - Reform
(Environmental Health Systems Support Act of 2023)**

Dear Chair Barve and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE or the Department) has reviewed Senate Bill 830 and would like to offer the following information regarding this legislation. MDE appreciates the sponsor for introducing this legislation and has worked with the sponsor on the bill's incorporated amendments to address some of MDE's concerns.

The revised SB 830 proposes MDE and the Maryland Department of Health (MDH) to conduct a study on staffing needs for environmental health specialists in local health departments. The study will include analysis of educational and licensing requirements, competitiveness of wages and feasibility of establishing an apprenticeship program. By December 1, 2023, MDE shall submit the report and findings to the Governor and General Assembly.

Additionally, the legislation requires MDE, in consultation with the Department of Legislative Services and the University of Maryland Agriculture and Food Systems Extension Program, to study the implications of the delegation of the Department's authority related to the well and septic system permitting to MDH. To note, MDE does not delegate to MDH, instead delegations are given to Local Approving Authorities, which can be local health departments or county government authorities. The study shall address the benefits of and issues with the existing system in which the Department delegates authority related to well and septic systems, review of other states administrative structure and accountability measures and the optimal long-term staff organization structure to address the issues of delays, communication and customer service. MDE shall submit an interim report of its findings and any recommendations for legislative or administrative changes by December 1, 2023 to the Governor and General Assembly. The final report and any recommendations shall be submitted by December 1, 2024 to the Governor and General Assembly.

Both of these studies, in coordination, with MDH, will be able to be completed with existing resources within the Department. MDE believes these studies could be beneficial to understanding and supporting both of these important issues.

Thank you for considering the Department's information regarding this legislation. We will continue to monitor Senate Bill 830 during the Committee's deliberations, and I am available to answer any questions you may have. Please feel free to contact me at 410-260-6301 or by e-mail at gabrielle.leach@maryland.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gabrielle Leach". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "G" and "L".

Gabrielle Leach
Deputy Director
Legislative and Intergovernmental Relations

Cc: The Honorable Katie Fry Hester
Lee Currey, Director, Water and Science Administration