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The Maryland House of Delegates
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**Delegate Dana Stein Testimony in Support of
HB831 Environment – Septic Systems – Online Database**

The goal of this bill is to create a statewide database of all septic systems in Maryland. Such a database will enable faster and more accurate information on the type, location, age, and major repairs of septic systems on individual properties. This data is needed for property owners needing to make repairs to their systems, buyers deciding whether to purchase a property with septic, and health departments charged with regulating and inspecting septic systems. The information in the proposed database would also be valuable for determining whether a system poses any environmental risks to drinking wells and nearby waterways.

Currently, the collection and access to septic information varies widely from county to county. Some counties have recently created their own electronic databases. Unfortunately, in other locations, the information is filed in boxes and filing cabinets, making it time consuming to locate and share information in a timely way.

One county reports it needs a full-time staff person doing nothing but pulling 50 – 80 records each day to provide homebuyers, inspectors, repair companies, or builders with the information needed regarding a septic system. Another county files its septic permits under the original homeowner's name—even when that owner has died and the property resold numerous times over a period of years. Imagine trying to find this information so a septic inspection can occur for a potential homebuyer 30 – 50 years later? The search would begin by tracing the property owners back over decades. Another county just shreds its septic permits after seven years, so there is no information available about the location or status of a property's septic system.

The intent of this bill is threefold:

1. Help local health departments save time by having this information online. These departments have a huge workload and searching old file folders should not take them away from other urgent needs.
2. Make it easier for inspectors, builders, and property owners to have information readily available when needed.
3. Help Maryland Department of the Environment better understand the age, location, and conditions of these systems.

Getting this database set up and populated will not be easy. It will require considerable support especially at the local level, so their already burdened workload is not made worse. The bill includes a workgroup to oversee the process and decide how best to get the needed information online in the most efficient way.

This bill also phases in the work to capture the many years of records. Records of systems installed since 2000 will be done first—by July 1, 2026—and then all records prior to that by July 1, 2033—ten years from now.

This database would track the following information:

- Location – address and location on the property
- Permit number
- Date of installation
- History of soil evaluation tests
- Name of designer and installers
- Type of system installed
- Type of property – residential, commercial, industrial
- Location of backup drain field if needed
- Repair history requiring a permit

For local governments that already have an accessible online database the state can provide a link to its information, or the county can choose to migrate their data to the state system. Local databases should have similar fields of data.

It is important that when a family buys a new house, they can get a prompt and accurate septic inspection, or, when there is a system sudden fails, a septic professional can get information about the system quickly so the repair can be done. Now it can take days or even weeks to get this information. That is too long.

I urge you to pass this legislation.