



March 01, 2023

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

Re: House Bill 831 - Environment Septic Systems - Online Database

Dear Chair Barve and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE or the Department) has reviewed House Bill 831 and would like to provide the following information. First, the Department would like to thank the sponsor for their continued leadership and partnership on septic system issues. MDE has met with the sponsor and advocates regarding some of the Department's concerns.

MDE agrees on the importance of having a transparent and consistent method of accessing septic system information statewide. However, the Department has already moved forward with plans to create such a database and is concerned that the bill's provisions would actually limit us from continuing that effort and set us back to "square one."

MDE is required to follow the statewide Major IT Development Project Process for this database project because: (1) the estimated total cost of development equals or exceeds \$1 million; and (2) the project is undertaken to support a critical business function associated with the public health, education, safety, or financial well being of the citizens of Maryland. *Attachment A* of this letter outlines key phases and actions that MDE currently plans to take under the Major IT Development Project Process. If HB 831 were to pass, it is likely the Department's current efforts would have to be reset in order to comply with the bill's provisions.

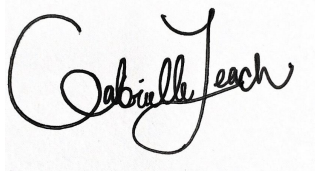
In lieu of the provisions of HB 831, the Department would like to commit to the following deliverables over the 2023 interim:

- MDE, in partnership with the Maryland Department of Health, will do an assessment on the number of septic records that are digital and that will need to be uploaded into the database. This will include consideration of those counties that have not yet transferred their records to a digital format and, to the extent practicable, an estimate of potential costs and labor requirements needed to scan these records;
- If a local jurisdiction has a link to their current septic system database, the Department will upload the link onto our website;
- MDE will create a timeline of when the database will be live along with resources needed; and

- The Department will share any additional information found during the process of pulling this assessment together.

Thank you again, and we look forward to continuing this conversation with you.

Best,

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 Dana Stein