



Testimony encouraging a FAVORABLE report on House Bill 831 – Septic Systems – Online Database

Environment and Transportation Committee
March 1, 2023

Dear Chair Barve and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT** of HB831, on behalf of Arundel Rivers Federation. Arundel Rivers is a non-profit organization dedicated to the protection, preservation, and restoration of the South, West and Rhode Rivers with over 3,500 supporters. Our mission is to work with local communities to achieve clean, fishable, and swimmable waterways for present and future generations.

House Bill 831 will phase in a statewide database for all septic systems in the state. This will address multiple gaps and issues both the general public and our environment faces, including:

- Providing homebuyers with timely and accurate information on a property's septic system,
- Ensuring septic professionals provide the best maintenance possible to septic systems after reviewing system information on the database,
- Local governments having a more organized and time-manageable process of locating information on septic systems, saving them time and money, and
- Providing our state much needed information about where old or failing systems may be located, better protecting our wells, waterways, and the shellfish industry.

Septic systems can be a significant source of pollution to the Chesapeake Bay, especially as you travel upstream in smaller rivers and streams. Similar to many river environmental non-profits in the region, Arundel Rivers runs a bacteria water quality monitoring program during the summer to provide those who swim and recreate on our waterways the data to make an educated decision on whether it is safe to swim or not. High levels of bacteria or E. coli, which can come from sources such as non-functioning septic systems can cause humans interacting with our waterways to become ill. It is imperative that the systems in our watershed are maintained and tracked in a transparent way to ensure both human and environmental health. This bill will modernize our septic system industry, providing an easier way to learn about one's own septic system.

Arundel Rivers Federation supports properly tracking, understanding, and maintaining septic systems to better protect our waterways and we respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE REPORT on HB831.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elle Bassett".

Elle Bassett
South, West and Rhode Riverkeeper
Arundel Rivers Federation