



Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H., Secretary

February 23, 2023

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

RE: SB 830 – Environmental Health Specialists and On–Site Sewage Disposal Systems – Reform (Environmental Health Systems Support Act of 2023) – Letter of Support with Amendments

Dear Chair Feldman and Committee Members:

The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) respectfully submits this letter of support with amendments for Senate Bill (SB) 830 – Environmental Health Specialists and On–Site Sewage Disposal Systems – Reform (Environmental Health Systems Support Act of 2023). This bill, if enacted, will: (1) require the Department of the Environment (MDE) to create a standardized permit form for onsite sewage disposal installations, and require local health departments (LHDs) to provide applicants with information on how to appeal decisions to MDE; (2) amend the Health-Occupations article to require consistent standards and regulations under Title 21, which pertains to the Board of Environmental Health Specialists; (3) require MDH to host monthly informational meetings on the interpretation and application of Health-Occupations Title 21 and corresponding regulations for local government employees who are or work with environmental health specialists; (4) require MDH to develop an online tracking system for onsite sewage disposal applications in conjunction with the Department of Information Technology (DoIT); (5) create additional positions in MDE; and (6) create a loan forgiveness program for the training of environmental health specialists.

MDH appreciates the attention this bill brings to the challenges affecting the environmental health workforce. MDH is committed to working with MDE on information management solutions, training, and communications improvements that are already underway. Additionally, MDH appreciates the collaboration with the bill sponsor on possible amendments and MDH is open to continued discussions on this bill.

MDH notes that the bill’s language amending the Health-Occupations article, as written, will not affect the Environment Article or regulations pertaining to onsite sewage disposal, and recommends that that language be removed from the bill. Further, MDH and MDE are currently meeting monthly (and more frequently in some cases) with the local environmental health units to ensure prompt resolution of any issues that arise regarding staffing shortages or other problems related to onsite sewage disposal system permitting. As such, MDH respectfully

recommends the removal of the bill language that requires MDH to convene monthly meetings with “local government employees who are or work with environmental health specialists.” Additionally, MDH notes that the bill language in Health-Occupations directing MDH to develop an online tracking system for onsite sewage disposal systems, which is under the purview of MDE, is not necessary as MDE is already in the process of developing such a system. This will potentially create a significant redundancy of effort and expense to the State.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact Megan Peters, Acting Director of Governmental Affairs at megan.peters@maryland.gov or (410) 260-3190.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "LH Scott".

Laura Herrera Scott, M.D., M.P.H.
Secretary