



TO: Members, Finance Committee

FROM: Maryland Conference of Local Environmental Health Directors
Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO)

SUBJECT: Senate Bill 399 Support As Amended

DATE: February 14, 2023

The Maryland Conference of Local Environmental Health Directors (the Conference), representing the county environmental health programs, and the Maryland Association of Health Officers (MACHO), the professional association representing the State's Health Officers who oversee the local environmental health programs in their local health departments (LHDs), support SB 399 As Amended. The Conference and MACHO are affiliates of the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo).

Senate Bill 399 will provide the Board of Environmental Specialists (Board) with the capability and flexibility to make decisions to qualify applicants to obtain a Certificate of Eligibility to work as an Environmental Health Specialist. Most importantly, this bill also will provide the Board the ability to recognize and approve an apprenticeship program currently being developed by the Maryland Department of Health and Morgan State University. This apprenticeship program will give students a direct pathway into the Environmental Health Specialist career field working under the supervision of a Licensed Environmental Health Specialist. This will be a valuable educational and training program to expand the number of Environmental Health Specialists in the State and assist in rectifying current workforce shortages affecting LHDs. Currently, several Local Health Departments have critical staffing shortages and overall, LHD Environmental Health programs have a 40% vacancy rate. These positions are critical in the review and issuance of permits in the well, septic, swimming pool and food program areas, specifically the review and approval of building permits. Expanding the number of Environmental Health Specialists will increase efficiency and reduce backlogs in the impacted counties and shore up the workforce in LHD Environmental Health Programs to prepare for community growth. The programs outlined in SB 399 are critical to public health and keeping the public and the environment safe.

Therefore, the Conference and MACHO respectively request the Committee give SB3 99 As Amended a **FAVORABLE** report. Thank you for the opportunity to share this testimony and our views and concerns on the proposal. If you have any further questions regarding this written testimony, please contact:

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