



Senate Bill 399

Health Occupations – Environmental Health Specialists - Revisions

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Finance Committee

Date: February 14, 2023

From: Sarah Sample

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 399. This bill was wisely developed in collaboration with the Board of Environmental Health Specialists and includes insights from the Conference of Environmental Health Directors. As such, it should help streamline the integration of entry-level Environmental Health Specialists into local departments, create more consistency with other boards across the state, and clarify various regulations for existing programs.

The gravity of the situation cannot be overstated as counties are currently facing shortages in these vital roles. Counties cannot afford to suffer the consequences of bureaucratic strains in the pipeline as Environmental Health Specialists are needed every day in every jurisdiction to make sure communities have the appropriate resources to stay healthy and thriving. Their role includes ensuring the safety of life's essentials - food, water, and habitat. Without these great efforts, residents could suffer the loss of essential public services and, even worse, a loss of life.

The provisions in this bill, as established by experts in the field, will help eager, qualified employees hit the ground running in all counties to make sure crucial services are not interrupted. By establishing an apprenticeship program, building more flexibility into laboratory obligations, and eliminating redundancies in educational requirements, local teams can fill vacancies with greater speed.

By collaboratively streamlining the system that supports these roles, Environmental Health Departments across the state will have more tools at their disposal to fill vacant positions as well as keep enthusiastic employees in place for years to come. For these reasons, MACo **SUPPORTS** SB 399 and urges a **FAVORABLE** report.