

Del. D. Jones Testimony - HB 256.pdf

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Position: FAV

DANA JONES
Legislative District 30A
Anne Arundel County

Appropriations Committee

Subcommittees

Vice Chair, Health and Social Services

Oversight Committee on Pensions

Joint Committee on Administrative,
Executive, and Legislative Review

Vice Chair, Anne Arundel
County Delegation



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony of Delegate Dana Jones
Before the Environment and Transportation Committee
In Support of HB 256
Waterway Incident Notification System (WINS) Workgroup
February 14th, 2024

Chair Korman, Vice-Chair Boyce, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

I come before you today to re-introduce HB 256, which would establish the Waterway Incident Notification (WINS) Workgroup.

This workgroup would study the feasibility of establishing a Waterway Incident Notification System to notify members of the public of active waterway emergencies involving a person at risk of death or serious bodily harm, emergency marine events, or marine hazards. This legislation has been introduced in response to a number of recent incidents in our State's waterways and is intended to improve the ability of members of the public to be aware of these serious emergencies in their local waterways, both for their own safety and also so that they can assist in locating individuals reported as missing. As a representative of District 30A, we are accustomed to emergency communication issues that water goes face. Including hazards on the water that are difficult to communicate with the large amount of boat traffic we have on the Bay and our two rivers, including coves, creeks, and lakes around the Annapolis area.

After discussions with the Maryland Department of Emergency Management, we have determined that the best way to move forward is by forming a workgroup. This legislation will bring together representatives of MDEM, the Natural Resources Police, the Department of Information Technology, the 9-1-1 Board, and local emergency management officials, and members of the General Assembly to determine the best way to create and implement such a system.

The deadline for the final report is September 30, 2025, with an interim report due on December 31, 2024 for any recommendations that the workgroup may have that can be considered at the next legislative session. Additionally, I am submitting this bill to you alongside a small amendment, which specifies protocols on appointee conduct in their capacity as a member of the workgroup

I respectfully request a favorable report on House Bill 256 with this amendment. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dana Jones". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Delegate Dana Jones

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Uploaded by: Dylan Behler

Position: FAV



Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Josh Kurtz, Secretary
David Goshorn, Deputy Secretary

February 14, 2024

BILL NUMBER: House Bill 256 - First Reader

SHORT TITLE: Waterway Incident Notification System (WINS) Workgroup

DEPARTMENT'S POSITION: SUPPORT

EXPLANATION OF DEPARTMENT'S POSITION

The Department is eager for the opportunity to participate in the Waterway Incident Notification System (WINS) Workgroup, to evaluate the feasibility of establishing a system of notifying mariners in times of emergency. Currently the only system for notifying mariners of an incident is through Marine Radio Channel 16, which is operated by the U.S. Coast Guard. Notification by this method requires that each vessel have a marine radio on board, which has become increasingly rare on small vessels since nearly everyone relies upon a cellular phone to summon assistance in times of need.

The Department is optimistic that the Workgroup will be able to identify an efficient and modern system for public notification of maritime emergencies, such as vessels in distress or overdue for arrival, vessel accidents, missing persons and sudden severe storms. This type of system would have a profound impact on the boating public's awareness of emergencies in their immediate vicinity, allowing them to avoid a storm, to assist a person or vessel in distress, and/or provide a more precise location of the emergency to first responders. Ultimately, this would, through timely notifications, decrease the number of storm related emergencies, and improve the likelihood of survivability for victims of maritime emergencies.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Many jurisdictions nationwide have methods of contacting the public during times of emergency, however, these are largely oriented toward land based political subdivision or zip code. There is no current mass maritime notification system in Maryland.

BILL EXPLANATION

This bill establishes a Waterways Incident Notification System Workgroup, and establishes the membership of that Workgroup, to evaluate the feasibility of a notification system for the purpose of alerting mariners to emergencies on Maryland waters.

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**The Maryland Department of the Environment
Secretary Serena McIlwain**

***House Bill 256
Waterway Incident Notification System (WINS) Workgroup***

Position: Support
Committee: Environment and Transportation
Date: February 14, 2024
From: Les Knapp

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) **SUPPORTS** HB 256. The bill creates a workgroup to study the feasibility of establishing a Waterway Incident Notification System (WINS) to notify members of the public of certain waterway emergencies.

WINS would notify members of the public, including recreational boaters and commercial watermen, of active waterway emergencies involving a person at risk of death or serious bodily harm, emergency marine events, or marine hazards. This includes certain environmental emergencies, such as hazardous substance spills.

The workgroup's membership consists of state legislators, state and local emergency management personnel, and representatives from the Maryland Departments of the Environment, Emergency Management, and Information Technology. The Department of Emergency Management shall provide staff for the workgroup.

Considering the feasibility of enhancing public notification systems for environmental and other marine hazards benefits and protects the residents of Maryland. Accordingly, MDE urges a **FAVORABLE** report for HB 256.

BaltimoreCounty_FWA_HB0256.pdf

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Position: FWA



JOHN A. OLSZEWSKI, JR.
County Executive

JENNIFER AIOSA
Director of Government Affairs

AMANDA KONTZ CARR
Legislative Officer

WILLIAM J. THORNE
Legislative Associate

BILL NO.: **HB 256**

TITLE: Waterway Incident Notification System (WINS) Workgroup

SPONSOR: Delegate Jones

COMMITTEE: Environment and Transportation

POSITION: **SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS**

DATE: February 14, 2024

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS WITH AMENDMENTS** House Bill 256 – Waterway Incident Notification System (WINS) Workgroup. This legislation would create a workgroup tasked with establishing a communications system that can alert both recreational and commercial boaters to emergencies or disasters on the Chesapeake Bay and other surrounding waterways.

It is imperative that the State of Maryland and local jurisdictions facilitate the infrastructure necessary to respond to disasters. The proposed communications system would address this need by significantly enhancing the safety of recreational and commercial boaters. The State of Maryland and Local governments must collaborate frequently and consistently to prevent incidents on the water. Accordingly, Baltimore County requests an amendment to HB 256 allowing the Baltimore County Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management to have a representative on the created workgroup, in addition to the other individual Counties named in the bill. Baltimore County first responders are responsible for responding to incidents in much of the Chesapeake Bay. Additionally, with the growth of Trade Point Atlantic and its marine terminal consisting of six deep-water multi-commodity berths, Baltimore County will have a larger role to play moving forward in ensuring the safety of commercial boating on the Bay and in its waterways.

Accordingly, Baltimore County urges a **FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS** report on HB 256 from the House Environment and Transportation committee. For more information, please contact Jenn Aiosa, Director of Government Affairs at jaiosa@baltimorecountymd.gov.