



An Affiliate of
The Maryland Association of Counties, Inc.

Date: February 26, 2024
TO: Members of the House Environment and Transportation Committee
FROM: Maryland Conference of Local Environmental Health Directors
Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO)
RE: HB 922 – Environment - Delegated Authorities - Well and Septic Program Permits

The Maryland Conference of Local Environmental Health Directors (Conference) and the Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO) provide a **Letter of Information for HB 922** that details existing efforts to collect and report information contained in the proposed legislation.

In August 2023, the Conference, working with the Maryland of the Environment (MDE) and the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), created a spreadsheet that includes well and septic permits and turnaround times for review. This document also lists the other MDE and MDH programs delegated to local health departments to ensure the health and safety of communities and the environment. This document can be expanded to include other items such as variances, groundwater discharge permits, shared facilities, large system co-review and innovative and alternative on-site sewage disposal systems.

MDE is currently drafting new Delegation Agreements for each local health department. These agreements authorize a Health Officer or other county official to perform the duties, powers, and functions as outlined in the regulations for the delegated programs. Reporting of data will be a requirement. These agreements could factor in additional performance measures that would be of benefit to MDE.

MDE recently submitted an interim report to the General Assembly on well and septic permit delegated agreements per SB830 passed in 2023 that included information from stakeholder surveys and regional meeting discussions. According to that survey data, 71% of respondents rated communication with local health departments as excellent. MDE is currently conducting other program appraisals and MACHO has requested that MDE resume regular audits of delegated programs.

To expedite the desired reporting, investment in an electronic data management platform is essential. This could be an entirely new statewide system or a method for existing systems to have back-end interoperability so the Departments could pull desired data in real time. Ideally the system would have a front-facing dashboard for the public to track permit processing status. In the absence of a statewide system, local health departments have cobbled together various platforms, or their counties have included them in their county permitting systems. Many local health departments do not have the resources to digitize and must rely on paper records. *MACHO and the Conference have made the request for an investment in an IT solution for local health department environmental programs for two decades.*

Local health departments not only issue well and septic permits; their environmental health programs play an integral role in the local permitting systems and planning and zoning processes They also perform other critical environmental health activities that protect the health and safety of their communities.

Thank you for considering this additional information. For more information, contact:
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