



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

House Bill 992

Environment - Delegated Authorities - Well and Septic Program Permits

Position: Support
Committee: Environment and Transportation
Date: February 28, 2024
From: Leslie Knapp, Jr.

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) **SUPPORTS** HB 992.

Bill Summary

House Bill 992 would require a local health department or county government that has been delegated authority by MDE for well and septic permitting to submit a schedule of permit review times to MDE for approval by December 1, 2024. Beginning three months after MDE approves the schedule and every three months thereafter, a delegated authority shall submit permit data to MDE for review.

Position Rationale

One of the tenets of MDE and the Wes Moore Administration is data transparency and performance evaluation. This is reflected by Governor Moore's introduction of the Transparent Government Act of 2024, which requires all state agencies to categorize their permits and provide target turnaround times. House Bill 992 would apply the same principles to local health departments or governments with delegated well and septic permitting authority.

Establishing reasonable performance standards and criteria is critical for the ongoing evaluation and improvement of government services, whether delivered at the state or local level. Establishing a baseline and monitoring for significant changes in performance allows for the early identification of emerging challenges and rapid response to address those challenges. The bill does not mandate a target permit turnaround time or impose a costly burden on a local health department or county government as every jurisdiction should be able to provide this basic information.

The reporting of the permit data included in the bill is being incorporated into new delegation agreements that MDE has drafted for each jurisdiction, with Cecil County government being the first to sign the new permit. The new agreement will be sent out to every delegated authority throughout this year. Assuming all parties commit to following the reporting required in the delegation agreements, this may abrogate the need for a separate bill.

For the reasons detailed above, MDE urges a **FAVORABLE** report for HB 992.

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