



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

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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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