



The Maryland Department of the Environment
Secretary Serena McIlwain

Senate Bill 222

State Board of Environmental Health Specialists - Quorum, Examination, and Apprenticeships

Position: Support

Committee: Health and Government Operations

Date: March 19, 2024

From: Leslie Knapp, Jr.

The Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) **SUPPORTS** SB 222. The bill removes a potential hurdle to hiring environmental health specialists.

Bill Summary

Senate Bill 222 provides that an applicant seeking licensure as an environmental health specialist may complete an apprenticeship approved by the State Board of Environmental Health Specialists (Board) in lieu of an environmental health specialist-in-training program. The Board must adopt regulations establishing the approval requirements of an apprenticeship and the minimum and maximum duration of an apprenticeship. The bill clarifies that individuals participating in the environmental health specialist-in-training program or an apprenticeship program are not subject to environmental health specialist licensure requirements during the time of participation. Currently, the Board administers license examinations. The bill would authorize the Board to approve a third-party examination provider to administer the examination. Finally, the bill also clarifies that a majority of the appointed members of the Board constitutes a quorum.

Position Rationale

Environmental health specialists provide critical public services, including well and septic system permit approvals, food safety inspections, and public swimming pool and campground inspections. Currently, there is a shortage of individuals entering the environmental health field and this has posed a challenge to some local jurisdictions in providing these important services in a timely and effective manner. One identified challenge is that environmental health applicants seeking licensure in Maryland must obtain 12 months of experience in an environmental health specialist-in-training program. The bill would offer an alternative pathway by allowing for an applicant to participate in approved apprenticeship that is part of the requirements of a Board-approved baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university. Doing an apprenticeship during the undergraduate process is typically easier than trying to obtain 12 months of experience in-training after graduation. For the reasons detailed above, MDE urges a **FAVORABLE** report for SB 222.

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