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February 25th, 2025

Senator Brian Feldman, Chair
Education, Energy and the Environment Committee
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SB 978 – UNFAVORABLE – Environmental Permits – Requirements for Public Participation and Impact and Burden Analyses (Cumulative Harms to Environmental Restoration for Improving Shared Health – CHERISH Our Communities Act)

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Asphalt Association (MAA) represents approximately 120 members, including 20 material producers and 100 contractors, engineering firms, and associate members, supporting a 7,000-person workforce. MAA actively collaborates with regulatory agencies to advocate for the asphalt industry, ensuring fair regulations at both the state and federal levels. Additionally, we support adequate funding for Maryland's multimodal transportation system.

Senate Bill 978 would require additional public participation and impact analysis for projects with a high potential for adverse environmental and public health effects. It mandates that permit applicants for specified projects conduct environmental impact analyses and, in certain cases, submit burden reports detailing existing environmental stressors. The Department of Environment would assess the reports and deny permits if a project would increase environmental harm. The bill also establishes a cumulative impact mitigation fund.

While we all aim to be good stewards of the environment, there is no way our Association can support a bill like SB 978. It would create an administrative nightmare for all permit review at the Department of Environment, slowing down the process substantially. The bill is too vague and leaves much open to interpretation, resulting in possible legal challenges, project rejections or the imposition of costly mitigation measures. These additional processes would also result in substantial added costs to every transportation project Maryland, which our state cannot afford at this time.

For these reasons, we ask that you vote UNFAVORABLE on Senate Bill 978.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tim Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tim Smith, P.E.
President
Maryland Asphalt Association