



Testimony in SUPPORT of HB747 – Environment – On-Site Wastewater Systems – Requirements for Inspection and Pumping Services

Environment and Transportation Committee
February 19, 2025

Dear Chair Korman and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT OF HB747**, on behalf of Arundel Rivers Federation. Deeply rooted in the South, West, and Rhode Rivers, Arundel Rivers Federation heals and protects our waterways and champions clean water across Maryland. Our vision is healthy waterways for all, and we achieve our mission through restoration, education and outreach, and Riverkeeper programs.

HB747 will ensure that septic systems are properly inspected and pumped out prior to property transfer or a when new tenant occupies the property. Inspecting and pumping out septic systems is crucial for maintaining their functionality, preventing environmental hazards, and avoiding costly repairs. Inspections and regular pump outs will prevent system failures, protect public health, better protect our local environment, save costs and extend the lifespan of the septic system, and maintain property values.

If a septic system is not functioning correctly, it can cause groundwater pollution. Contaminated water from a failing system can seep into local rivers, or underground aquifers, impacting local ecosystems and wildlife. Regular pumping and inspections help safeguard the surrounding environment, preventing the spread of harmful contaminants. The Comprehensive Evaluation of System Response (CESR) report has highlighted the need to address non-point source pollution in our waterways. A conventional septic system does not remove much nitrogen, instead delivering about 23.2 pounds of nitrogen per year to groundwater. Even Best Available Technology (BAT) systems, only reduce nitrogen loading to about half that of a conventional system. Comparatively, wastewater treatment plants with enhanced nutrient removal can discharge effluent containing only 3milligrams per liter of nitrogen. **Pollution from septic systems now exceeds nitrogen pollution from our wastewater treatment plants in 17 counties.** Even in counties where wastewater treatment plants are contributing more nitrogen, septic systems are still having a large impact at the local subwatershed level. For example, **16% of Anne Arundel County's nitrogen loading is coming from septic systems.** This is likely higher in waterways such as the South, West, and Rhode River where there are no large wastewater treatment plants discharging.

Now that we have addressed the larger wastewater treatment plants through Bay Restoration Funds, it is time we begin addressing septic systems as part of the battle to address nitrogen pollution to meet our water quality goals. This bill takes a reasonable, inexpensive, and proactive step towards identifying problem systems and properly maintaining systems to prevent future problems.

Arundel Rivers is aware of proposed amendments from Delegate Guyton providing exceptions to required inspections and pump outs, which Arundel Rivers is supportive of. We are grateful to Delegate Guyton for introducing this important legislation and we respectfully request a **FAVORABLE REPORT on HB747.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elle Bassett".

Elle Bassett
South, West, and Rhode Riverkeeper
Arundel Rivers Federation