



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

House Bill 1196 **Environment - Water Quality Testing -** **Secondary Maximum Contaminant Levels Action Plan**

Date: March 31, 2026

To: Education, Energy, & the Environment Committee

Position: **FAVORABLE w/ AMENDMENT**

From: Matt Stegman,
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Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS House Bill 1196**, which takes an important step toward addressing a longstanding gap in Maryland's water quality framework: the lack of a clear, enforceable approach to secondary maximum contaminant levels (SMCLs) in drinking water systems.

While SMCLs are not currently enforceable, the conditions they address – discoloration, odor, and taste – are not trivial. For many Maryland residents, particularly those served by small or privately operated systems such as mobile home communities, these issues are persistent and undermine confidence in the safety and reliability of their drinking water. HB1196 appropriately recognizes that these concerns warrant a more systematic and transparent response.

CBF is supportive of the requirement that the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) develop a statewide action plan. The elements required under the bill – data collection on secondary contaminants, evaluation of enforcement approaches, comparison to other states, cost and feasibility analysis, and a defined implementation timeline – reflect the type of comprehensive, science-based planning that is necessary to move from recognition of a problem to meaningful solutions.

CBF's work across the Chesapeake Bay watershed has consistently demonstrated that upstream water quality issues – whether in wastewater systems, stormwater management, or drinking water infrastructure – have downstream consequences for both public health and environmental integrity.

We also strongly support the bill's emphasis on stakeholder engagement, particularly the inclusion of residents served by affected systems and community-based organizations. CBF's experience working with communities across Maryland underscores the importance of incorporating lived experience into regulatory design. Residents who routinely encounter discolored, foul-smelling, or bad-tasting water bring critical insight into both the scope of the problem and the urgency of addressing it.

As MDE develops this action plan, CBF encourages a focus on:

- Ensuring that data collection and reporting are publicly accessible and easy to understand;

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 200,000 members and e-subscribers, including 71,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.

- Evaluating enforcement approaches that are practical and meaningful, particularly for smaller systems; and
- Identifying pathways to implementation that prioritize equity and timely improvements, rather than indefinite study.

HB1196 does not immediately mandate enforcement of SMCLs, but it lays the groundwork for informed decision making and future action. That is a necessary and constructive step forward.

CBF requests the committee's FAVORABLE report on HB 1196.

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at mstegman@cbf.org.