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Education, Energy, and the
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Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and
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The Senate of Maryland ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

SB 257 – Mel Noland Fund Reporting

I am Senator Bryan Simonaire presenting SB 257 which is identical to HB 533.

This bill simply provides additional transparency to our committee by slightly modifying an existing DNR annual report.

The existing report goes to this *committee* and the *House Environment and Transportation Committee*.

This bill adds reporting on:

1. The funding amount distributed into the *Mel Noland Woodland Incentives and Fellowship Fund* and
2. If any uncertainties about the amount, specify the uncertainty and the action needed to resolve it.

That is the bill.

So why is this bill needed?

Over the years, the required monies to be transferred into the Fund have been often miscalculated or simply overlooked with little or no legislative knowledge.

Ultimately the monies were not distributed to the Fund.

As we recently heard in a briefing, this was highlighted in the April 2025 DLS audit showing hundreds of thousands of dollars not distributed properly into the Fund just in the last several years alone.

To DNR's credit, they have been diligently working to rectify this situation as it deals with several different entities to ensure the correct amounts are calculated.

This bill is not about rehashing the audit or what happened, this is about providing our committee and the legislature transparency and more information, so going forward we can have confidence that the Fund is receiving the lawfully appropriate amounts.

I believe in preventive actions opposed to reactive measures, hence the additional reporting requirements.

I have experts on the topic who can answer detailed questions about the Fund and its usage, but that is the bill.

For all these reasons, I ask for your favorable consideration.