

KATIE FRY HESTER
Legislative District 9
Carroll and Howard Counties

Education, Health, and
Environmental Affairs Committee

Chair, Joint Committee on
Cybersecurity, Information Technology
and Biotechnology



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Sponsor Testimony In Support of SB172 - Bay Restoration Fund - Authorized Uses

January 29th, 2020

Good afternoon Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee:

I am pleased to present Senate Bill 172. This bill will add climate resiliency and flood control to the list of factors the Maryland Department of the Environment may consider when awarding funding from the Bay Restoration Fund. This bill would also add “volume” and “quality control” as factors to consider when evaluating local stormwater management program grants.

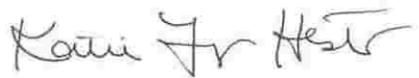
As instances of severe flood events have affected communities around the State, local jurisdictions have worked to implement resiliency and stormwater management policies to address climate change and the risks it poses to their residents. These capital projects control runoff from climate change-induced, intense rainstorms that cause serious damage to communities and drive nitrogen, phosphorus, and debris laden waters into the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and its tributaries. However, for communities that are still grappling with the implementation of mitigation projects, like Ellicott City in my District, the financing of these expensive projects can be an extremely difficult challenge to overcome.

When the Bay Restoration Fund was created in 2004, it represented a large step towards improving the overall water quality of the bay, and focused mainly on financing wastewater treatment plants and enhanced nutrient removal technologies. However, as time has gone on and the state’s suite of policies aimed at this issue of bay water quality have been proven effective, the causes of bay water pollution have changed significantly enough to warrant additional attention. During our briefing on the Bay Restoration effort, experts testifying on the water quality of the bay informed our committee that a major source of bay pollution was in fact inadequate runoff and stormwater management. While the majority of funding within the Wastewater Account of the Chesapeake Bay Fund would continue to be directed towards wastewater treatment plants, the passage of this bill would provide MDE with the option of funding a small portion of projects aimed at addressing this rising threat to the Bay’s overall health.

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation and MDE have proposed a friendly amendment to the bill that will better reflect the intent of the legislation and will allow funding “relating to water quality, climate resiliency or flood control,” which I look forward to presenting to this committee.

Providing the Maryland Department of the Environment with this flexibility and discretion acknowledges the inextricable link between stormwater runoff and water quality, while providing flood affected communities like mine and so many of yours with an additional tool to manage this threat to the overall health of the Chesapeake Bay. For that reason, **I respectfully request a favorable report for SB172.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Katie Fry Hester".

Senator Katie Fry Hester
Howard and Carroll Counties