



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

House Bill 700

Highway Construction - Storm Drains -
Covers and Task Force on Preventing Debris From Entering Storm Drains

DATE: FEBRUARY 20, 2020

POSITION: SUPPORT

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation SUPPORTS House Bill 700. Trash and debris in local waterways can become a hazard to infrastructure, fish and people. HB 700 would help reduce the amount of trash that stormwater conveys into rivers and creeks, tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay, by requiring designs for new storm drains to stop larger trash and debris from entering stormwater pipes.

COMMENTS

Excess trash and debris in local waterways risk ecological and human health. Small organisms ingest tiny plastic pieces, which are transferred up the food chain. Trash serves as a substrate for toxic chemicals and pathogens to accumulate. Large amounts of debris can interfere with recreation on shorelines and in the water. The Anacostia and Patapsco rivers are so heavily burdened that the State had to adopt a pollution model and control plan for trash that is normally reserved for pervasive pollutants like nutrients, sediment and toxic chemicals.

HB 700 would reduce this pollution by requiring designs for new storm drains to stop larger trash and debris from entering stormwater pipes. A field study of four major Maryland rivers found plastic pollution in 59 of 60 samples, with the amount increasing closer to developed areas where stormwater is the dominant contributor to pollution. (Yonkos et al., 2014) Samples collected by Trash Free Maryland in 2015 confirmed these findings and demonstrated that the larger debris targeted by HB 700 breaks down into microplastics and smaller pieces of concern to the environment and human health. As such, the bill introduces an important in-field tool to support ongoing source-control initiatives that reduce trash in local waterways, including the General Assembly's action last year to ban certain polystyrene products. The Task Force established by HB 700 could address cost and maintenance of these designs and identify additional measures to protect local stormwater systems and waterways from excess trash and debris.

CONCLUSION

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation requests a favorable report on HB 700 from the Environment and Transportation Committee. For more information, please contact Erik Fisher, AICP, Maryland Assistant Executive Director and Maryland Land Use Planner, at 443-482-2096 or efisher@cbf.org.

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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 300,000 members and e-subscribers, including over 107,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.