

An Affiliate of
the Maryland Association
of Counties, Inc.



Reply to:

February 16, 2021

The Honorable Paul Pinsky, Chair,
Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee
320 James Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: SB 516 – State Board of Environmental Health Specialists – Fees – General Fund

Dear Chair Pinsky and Committee Members:

The Maryland Conference of Local Environmental Health Directors (the Conference), along with all Maryland Health Officers as the Maryland Association of County Health Officers (MACHO), **strongly supports SB 516** as written with respect to repealing the existing State Board of Environmental Health Specialist Fund and directing future monies collected into the General Fund of the State.

The Licensed Environmental Health Specialists (LEHS's) are a dedicated but relatively small, group of Public Health professionals who play a key role in implementing and overseeing a number of critical health and environmental issues, initiatives and regulations established by the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), plus local jurisdictions. Ensuring safe public and private water supplies, proper food safety preparation, along with oversight of recreational venues are but a few of the essential public health duties assigned to LEHS's. This past year, EHS's have been at the forefront and on the frontline of addressing key aspects of State and Local Executive Orders regarding COVID-19 compliance measures for safe business operations and responding to thousands of citizen COVID-19 concerns statewide.

Key to the continued level of professionalism, approval and oversight of training requirements, disciplinary determinations, along with general operations, rests with the Board of Environmental Health Specialists (the Board). Back in July 2012, despite the Department of Legislative Services recommendation to keep the Board general funded, the Board was moved to a State Board of Environmental Health Specialists Fund. With a limited membership (approximately 570 LEHS's) and recurring expenditure gaps, using the special funding status to support its on-going and increasing operational costs results in undue risk and continues to threaten the Board's existence.

The Conference and MACHO believe that the ability to maintain and sustain the Board with adequate funding to meet existing balance shortfalls can best be achieved with the move out of a special fund obligation, and back into a general fund payment and support structure. Accordingly, we request the Committee **SUPPORT SB 516** as written. Companion HB 65 received a unanimous favorable review from Appropriations.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views on this matter. If you have further questions concerning this written testimony, please contact me at 240-777-3840.

Respectfully,

Kenneth Welch, President
Maryland Conference of Local Environmental Health Directors