



**MARYLAND**  
Chamber of Commerce

**LEGISLATIVE POSITION:**

**Letter of Information**

**House Bill 204**

**Environment and Natural Resources-Complaints, Inspections and Enforcement-  
Information Maintenance and Reporting**

**House Environment & Transportation Committee**

**Thursday, January 27, 2021**

Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the Committee:

Founded in 1968, the Maryland Chamber of Commerce is the leading voice for business in Maryland. We are a statewide coalition of more than 5,000 members and federated partners, and we work to develop and promote strong public policy that ensures sustained economic recovery and growth for Maryland businesses, employees, and families.

House Bill 204 would require the Maryland Department of Environment to receive and process complaints involving suspected environmental violations in a certain manner, and to develop and maintain a website that contains information on complaints, inspections, and enforcement actions.

The Chamber and its members recognize that the information that the legislation requires the Department to include online and in regular reports is publicly available already through FOIA request. However, there is concern from among our members that publishing this information as proposed in the bill could lead to inaccurate public conclusions given the fact that many complaints may not ultimately be found to be valid. As well, inspection findings may indicate more technical issues than significant environmental concerns. Therefore, businesses may unfairly appear to be in violation of complying with permits. Lastly, our members have expressed concern that this information could be misused by external stakeholders and organizations to stop or discredit a business, project, or initiative.

The Chamber believes that continuing to require the information to be accessed through a FOIA request, as opposed to being included online, retains public access to information while fairly protecting the credibility and reputations of permitted businesses.

[MDCHAMBER.ORG](http://MDCHAMBER.ORG)

60 West Street, Suite 100, Annapolis 21401 | 410-269-0642