



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

House Bill 204

Environment and Natural Resources – Complaints, Inspections, and Enforcement –
Information Maintenance and Reporting

Date: January 27, 2021
To: House Environment and
Transportation Committee

Position: **SUPPORT**
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Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** HB 204 which requires both the Department of Environment and Department of Natural Resources to make complaints and enforcement data more available to the public through websites and reports to the Governor and Legislature.

CBF, along with many of our environmental organization partners, play a “watchdog” role in assuring transparency of government decisions involved in implementing the state’s environmental laws and regulations. Compliance with laws passed by this body and regulations promulgated by agencies with the help of broad stakeholder involvement represents the public’s role in preventing pollution of the state’s waters and destruction of the state’s fish and wildlife populations and their supporting habitats.

Residents often reach out directly to environmental organizations seeking advice and guidance on where and how to submit information regarding potential violations that require enforcement or investigation. CBF and our partner organizations’ ability to assist them in resolving these issues and more importantly assure protection of the state’s waters and natural resources, often requires access to information about the nature of the complaint and whether the Department is aware of potential violation or has begun corrective action. Lack of responsive by agencies to CBF’s requests for information of this type has, in the past, frustrated attempts to aid the public.

HB 204 requires the Departments to maintain and post relevant complaint and enforcement data through a public website and reports to the Governor and Legislature. This step towards increased transparency is in line with citizen expectations and the capability of contemporary technology.

CBF urges the Committee’s FAVORABLE report on HB 204.

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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 109,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.