



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education

House Bill 545

Natural Resources – Licenses, Permits, Registrations, and Certificates -
Digital or Electronic Format

Date: February 10, 2021

To: House Environment & Transportation Committee

Position:

OPPOSE

Contact:

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Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **OPPOSES** HB 545 which requires the Department of Natural Resources to make available all licenses, permits, registrations, and certificates it issues in a digital or electronic format upon request. This legislation may impede the effective enforcement of Maryland's natural resources laws which ensure that the resources of the Chesapeake Bay are utilized in a safe, sustainable manner.

Effective Enforcement of Natural Resources Laws is Critical to the Chesapeake Bay Ecosystem

Maryland's natural resources laws exist to ensure that the state's natural resources are utilized in a manner that ensure their long-term sustainability and enjoyment for future generations. The effective enforcement of these laws is critical to the health of the Chesapeake Bay and to those who recreate and make their livelihood from its bounty. These laws are enforced by Maryland's Natural Resources Police (NRP), the oldest natural resources law enforcement agency in the country.

As written, HB545 casts a broad net, requiring DNR to make all licenses, permits, registrations, and certificates available digitally. This could present exceptional difficulties to Natural Resources Police officers on patrol. For example, in certain parts of the Chesapeake Bay, cell phone service is spotty to non-existent. A patrol officer checking anglers to determine if they had the appropriate license to be fishing in state waters would have no means to determine such if the angler had a digital certificate on a device that they were not able to access.

Additionally, several licenses and permits issued by DNR require physical decals affixed to a boat. These displays allow an NRP officer to observe vessels from shore to determine if their activities are consistent with the licenses displayed on the vessel. Without these physical decals, an NRP officer would be required to launch a boat and approach each vessel to check that the occupants had the appropriate licenses for the activities in which they were participating.

Unfortunately, the Natural Resources Police perennially suffers from vacant positions and funding cuts. These budget challenges underscore the need for policies that increase the enforceability of natural resources laws, not make their enforcement more challenging.

CBF urges the Committee's UNFAVORABLE report on HB 545.

For additional questions, contact Robin Jessica Clark, Maryland Staff Attorney at rclark@cbf.org, 443.995.8753

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