



## House Bill 497

### *Health Occupations – Environmental Health Specialists - Regulation*

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

To: Health and Government Operations  
Committee

Date: February 9, 2016

From: Natasha Mehu

The Maryland Association of Counties **OPPOSES** HB 497. This bill would repeal the State Board of Environmental Health Specialists and shift licensure responsibilities to a national organization. This change would have a negative and costly impact on employee recruitment and retention.

MACo is concerned that shifting state licensure oversight and requirements to the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) will create barriers to employment and result in a loss of employees.

The change presents a number of challenges to recruiting new employees. The field of environmental health already faces difficulties attracting new workers. NEHA licensure requirements will create a more stringent and expensive path to licensure than what is currently in place in Maryland – an additional deterrent to new employee prospects.

The shift also presents a threat to retaining existing employees. There is no guarantee of reciprocity with current state licensed specialists. In many cases these hard-working and experienced employees will have to take and pass the NEHA test to continue to work. An additional subset of employees may not be able to meet the minimum education requirements under NEHA that were not required when first licensed to practice in the state decades ago. Both of these classes of state licensed specialists would potentially face termination.

Counties rely on their staff of environmental health specialists to perform inspections and enforce compliance with health and environmental laws that help ensure citizens are safe. For decades, the state board has been instrumental in ensuring there has been a knowledgeable, skilled, and disciplined environmental specialist workforce in the state. For these reasons MACo urges an **UNFAVORABLE** report on HB 497.