



## Senate Bill 200

### *Health Occupations - State Board of Environmental Health Specialists - Sunset Extension and Revisions*

MACo Position: **OPPOSE**

Date: March 29, 2016

To: Health and Government Operations Committee

From: Natasha Mehu

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **OPPOSES** SB 200. This bill makes dramatic and unnecessary changes to state licensing of environmental health specialists.

Maryland's licensing for environmental health specialists has worked well. 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 Maryland Board of Environmental Health Specialists (Board) has been instrumental in ensuring there has been a knowledgeable, skilled, and disciplined environmental specialist workforce in the state. MACo would like to see the Board continue to provide this valuable service.

However, Section 3 of SB 200 threatens the Board's ability to provide these services. It would require the Board to align their current licensure requirements with those of the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) and focus efforts on getting state licensees to acquire the education and training to obtain NEHA licensing. The Board is then required to draft implementing legislation. These requirements would have a negative impact on employee recruitment and Board operations.

SB 200 would create a substantially more onerous path to licensure than what is currently in place in Maryland. NEHA requires an individual to take and pass their exam before they can obtain an in-training certificate and gain relevant experience for licensure. Maryland's process works in reverse - reasonably allowing an individual to train on the job and earn a living while preparing for the exam.

Additionally, **NEHA licensure requires a degree in Environmental Health – a degree that is not offered at any college in Maryland.** The state board currently accepts a range of compatible degrees that are offered at local institutions. A move to NEHA standards would limit local recruitment and would force employers to search outside of the state for new hires.

Requiring the Board to focus their efforts on aligning licensure requirements to NEHA and drafting legislation to accomplish these conditions takes the state board's time and attention away from performing other necessary functions. The Board plays a valuable role in managing continuing education credits and investigating and overseeing disciplinary actions. The Board and its members are better served improving these functions rather than unnecessarily being forced to change their licensing requirements.

MACo is supportive of extending the sunset for the Maryland Board of Environmental Health Specialists but remains concerned that Section 3 requiring alignment with NEHA licensure requirements would have a significant negative operational impact on the Board and the state's environmental health specialist workforce. For these reasons, MACo urges an **UNFAVORABLE** report on SB 200.