

Maryland Defense Research Coalition (MDRC)

191 Main Street, Suite 310

Annapolis, MD 21401

March 2, 2021

The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky, Chairman
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
2 West, Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Senate Bill 889 - Controlled Hazardous Substance Facility Permit - Research Facilities - Chemical Warfare Material Requirements - FAVORABLE

Dear Chairman Pinsky, Senator Jennings and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tom Albro, and I currently serve as the Chairman of the Maryland Defense Research Coalition (MDRC). I am also a former President of the Army Alliance.

Both the Army Alliance and the MDRC support the overall mission of the Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG) and both organizations are advocating for Senate Bill 889. The language change in this bill is necessary for the United States Army to continue to explore new and innovative chemical and biological defense technologies, in order to protect both our warfighters and the security interests of our nation. During the past 100 years, Aberdeen Proving Ground has grown to become the primary focus of research and development globally for the United States Army. APG is one of several military installations in Maryland that are vital instruments of our national defense. They also provide a significant benefit to the economy of the State of Maryland. Senate Bill 889 addresses the need to modernize Maryland public policy in our environmental laws, in recognition of the evolving mission of APG for our national defense.

Approximately 30 years ago, Maryland enacted a series of statutes intended to protect our environment during the necessary process of the destruction of large quantities of chemical agent stored at APG. The U.S. no longer has large stockpiles of the chemical weapons that were created during the early part of the 20th century but the threat of chemical weapons has not diminished. The Maryland law enacted in the early 1990s had the support of all interested parties, and it has worked well.

Today, however, both the times and the circumstances have changed. Maryland must honor its commitment to protect the environment, and also recognize that APG is dealing with different chemical weapons threats.

The mission of APG has evolved to contemplate these new threats. APG is charged with collecting and studying these new hazardous materials as well as devices and technologies for the purpose of mitigating those chemical and biological threats. Their goal is straightforward: to protect our troops and assure our national defense.

Chemical weapons are constantly evolving; therefore, it is necessary that APG's vital services be performed without undue delay. Our forces deployed across the world need this research to be accomplished as quickly as possible.



As a practical matter, the hazardous materials needed to be studied by APG today are in significantly smaller quantities. Therefore, the requirements of current Maryland law, which were intended to apply to the destruction of large quantities of chemical weapons, are not applicable to the research, development or demonstration of technologies using significantly smaller quantities of chemical agents. Senate Bill 889 preserves the current statutory framework for its historic mission of destroying hazardous materials in large quantities, while making a limited exception to these requirements for the evaluation of destruction technologies if done only for research, development or demonstration purposes.

The MDRC supports this modest change in Maryland law. Because of APG's exceptional health and safety record, we are assured that the Army will conduct these activities with the safety of employees, and of the local community, foremost among its concerns.

For these reasons, we respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 889.

Sincerely,



Thomas G. Albro, Chairman
Maryland Defense Research Coalition

