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Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Unfavorable Testimony for Senate Bill 808
Anaerobic Digestion Technology - Coordination and Guidance

Chair Brian Feldman and Vice Chair Cheryl Kagan,

On behalf of our over 40,000 members in Marylanders, we urge you to oppose the proliferation of waste-to-energy schemes like poultry-waste biogas. Manure, litter and sludge are waste streams. When they are regarded as revenue streams, perverse incentives to maximize manure production follows. Unfortunately, anaerobic digester projects and their financing depend on the generation of emissions to remain financially viable, running opposite the goal of emissions reduction.

Poultry waste is already impacting the region, and anaerobic digesters do nothing to combat the nutrient pollution problem. Digesters do not get rid of waste, in fact they concentrate it. Digesters do not stop nutrient pollution like phosphorus run-off, in fact they could make it worse. Digesters guarantee the continued production of waste - because they must be fed to operate.

Prompting the large-scale development of anaerobic digesters and other waste-to-energy schemes has real implications for Marylanders:

1. **Biogas digesters threaten air and water quality, and put sensitive ecosystems like the Chesapeake Bay at risk.** Biogas facilities emit smog-forming nitrogen oxides, ammonia and hydrogen sulfide into the air, and the digestate that remains is highly concentrated with harmful ammonia that leaches into soil and waterways.
2. **Digesters entrench industrial pollution.** Biogas buildout entrenches phosphorus and nitrogen-rich waste streams. Instead of reducing waste streams, it monetizes them and creates methane refineries across the state. According to the USDA "An anaerobic digester does not change the volume of the material or the amount of nutrients in the waste stream. The by-products from the system will need to be utilized in accordance with the nutrient management plan."
3. **Digesters threaten our climate by entrenching gas infrastructure.** The Maryland Office of Public Council released a report late 2022 showing that the replacement and expansion of gas infrastructure will cause gas delivery costs to skyrocket in Maryland. They add, "Because we need to address climate change, to which fossil gas contributes,



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gas utilities themselves face the possibility that their investments will become obsolete and uneconomic. If that happens, the public may be asked to bail them out.”

It is also clear that the bill does not factor the public health implications nor the environmental justice impacts that digesters may have on the communities where they may be sited. As written, the bill fails to outline a process for community participation, which seems reckless and exclusionary to the stakeholders that live where these digesters are sited. In Maryland, it is likely that digesters would be sited in communities which are already overburdened with pollution and that have had little voice in decisions impacting their health and environment.

For these reasons the state should not be trying to expedite permitting of anaerobic digesters.

We urge an unfavorable report to SB808 and thank you for your thoughtful consideration

Signed,

Jorge Aguilar
Southern Region Director
Food & Water Watch