

JUSTIN READY
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Carroll County

—
MINORITY WHIP
—
Finance Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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Senator Justin Ready
SB 1074 Environment – Industrial Sludge Utilization Permit - Establishment

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

Senate Bill 1074 as amended is bipartisan legislation that would establish a regulatory program at MDE for the usage of “industrial sludge.” Several of my constituents in Carroll County have contacted my office about the use of industrial sludge as fertilizer. One farmer was spreading this fertilizer from early spring until late fall making it impossible to spend anytime outdoors during these months due to the smell and flies. When we contacted MDA concerning this problem, it was discovered that there were similar complaints in other parts of the State.

“Industrial Sludge” is a byproduct of industrial, agricultural, or manufacturing processes and applied to agricultural land for disposal/fertilizer. Done properly, sludge would be applied to land only in certain quantities and during certain times of the year (for example, not during winter when dormant plants don't absorb nutrients) and quickly incorporated into soil to prevent odors and nutrient runoff into nearby waterways. Storage would be sited to not impact neighbors or leak into nearby waterways.

Neighboring states have adopted regulations for industrial sludge and Maryland, not having done so, was receiving more than half the region's sludge for application to fields. You will hear from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation today that in addition to the unpleasant effect of being near this product, it is also extremely harmful for our waterways and the Chesapeake Bay.

As amended, Senate Bill 1074 creates a robust regulatory regime for DAF sludge that will ensure responsible farmers are able to use the material in a manner that minimizes community nuisance, increases compliance with existing nutrient management regulations, and gives regulators the tools they need to crack down on bad actors. The bill establishes a permitting program for those who haul, store, and apply industrial sludge to land, putting Maryland on par with neighboring states that administer similar programs and closing a significant loophole that allows Maryland waters to be harmed.

I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 867.