



House Bill 1404

Environment – Storage of Dissolved Air Flotation By-Products – Local Authority

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Environment & Transportation Committee

Date: March 8, 2024

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 1404. The bill broadens county authority related to the storage of certain types of industrial sludge utilization.

Industrial sludge is a by-product of large-scale animal husbandry, and – if properly applied in controlled doses – can be an effective fertilizer. Agricultural operators who apply sludge to their crops, largely choose to do so due to profit motive. Companies that produce sludge pay top dollar to get rid of the substance, as it has an extremely noxious aroma and is highly regulated in most jurisdictions. As state agencies have yet to adopt adequate regulations, profit-hungry operators have begun a “sludge rush” on Maryland, applying huge unnecessary quantities and storing massive volumes in agricultural communities. Residents who live within proximity to these operations describe serious localized effects of these dispersals.

At its core, HB 1404 is a bill aimed at protecting the health and safety of Marylanders. Counties are the closest unit of government to the people and often hear about issues well before leaders at the State. By clarifying local authority on this issue, local leaders can act in tandem with the State in both managing, and mitigating, the sludge rush on Maryland.

Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report on HB 1404.