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Education, Energy, and
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Executive Nominations Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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The House Environment and Transportation Committee
SB 808 – Anaerobic Digestion Technology – Coordination and Guidance
Statement of Support by Bill Sponsor Senator Mary Beth Carozza

Thank you Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and members of the distinguished House Environment and Transportation Committee for this opportunity to present Senate Bill 808 – Anaerobic Digestion Technology – Coordination and Guidance, and to respectfully ask for your support for this bill.

SB 808 would require the Maryland Department of Agriculture, in coordinate with the Maryland Energy Administration, the Department of the Environment, and the Department of Commerce, to establish guidance for farmers regarding the development and implementation of anaerobic digestion technology. This guidance would include information on obtaining required permits and electric interconnection, available tax incentives and energy rebates, and relevant regulations for waste systems, especially those that incorporate animal waste.

The bill also directs the Maryland Department of Agriculture to coordinate with these same Maryland state agencies along with the University of Maryland College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (land grant university), farmers, and electric companies to ensure anaerobic digestion technology projects are not unduly delayed.

This legislation would improve the current process at the local level by putting all the information in one place which would clarify which permits are needed.

Anaerobic digestion is a process through which bacteria breaks down organic matter, such as animal manure, wastewater biosolids, and food wastes. This process creates a product known as biogas, and when purified, biogas is a renewable energy that can be used to provide heat, generate electricity, fuel our vehicles, and create other energy products.

Anaerobic digestion is hugely beneficial to our farmers in ways that more traditional waste management systems simply do not offer. For example, anaerobic digesters can destroy more than 90 percent of disease-causing bacteria, helps keep the soil healthy, and protects local water resources by reducing nutrient run-off. It also allows farms to be more energy independent. Many farms must engage in diverse revenue streams in order to remain afloat, and anaerobic

digestion is a potential revenue stream for our farmers that can also contribute to us reaching our renewable energy goals.

As an example, Millennium Farms is a 50-acre farm in Pocomoke with an anaerobic digester facility that has been in operation since 2017. This facility converts 1,200 tons of poultry litter from the farm into a nutrient-rich soil conditioner sold under the brand name “Element Soil.” Based on the success of this facility, the operating company is currently working on building a second, larger anaerobic digestion facility in Somerset County and intends to work on various agricultural-related projects in cooperation with the University of Maryland Eastern Shore.

The digestate produced by anaerobic digestion currently is classified as an approved soil conditioner under the Maryland Commercial Fertilizer Law. Last year, I sponsored legislation that would have created a workgroup to consider incentives for the use of this organic soil produced by the anaerobic digestive process. At the same time, the State of Virginia was conducting a similar workgroup called the Waste Diversion and Recycling Task Force, which released their findings in November of 2022, which have been helpful to our efforts in developing this legislation. The University of Maryland also released the Maryland Animal Waste Technology Assessment and Strategy Planning Final Report in September of 2023, which provided extensive information regarding anaerobic digestion specific to Maryland.

SB 808 is based on the findings and recommendations of both the Task Force and the Final Report. The Task Force recommended that there should be regulations that define siting, design, construction, and operational requirements for anaerobic digesters. The Final Report recommended to create consistency and efficiency in the process of permitting, energy rebates, and tax credits, and creating a regional approach to funding waste technologies that includes out-of-state impacts.

According to the EPA, anaerobic digesters on livestock farms generated enough energy to supply 53,000 homes in 2013 alone. That was over 10 years ago. This is an untapped renewable energy source in Maryland, and establishing guidance for farmers regarding the development and implementation of Anaerobic Digestion technology would support the current and future needs of this important industry.

Mr. Chair and Vice Chair, I respectfully urge the House Environment and Transportation Committee members for a favorable report on Senate Bill 808. Thank you for your kind attention and consideration.