



TO: The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky, Chair
Members, Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
The Maryland Department of the Environment

FROM: Pamela Metz Kasemeyer
J. Steven Wise
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DATE: January 18, 2022

RE: **SUPPORT** – Senate Bill 171 – *Environment – Public Participation Modernization Act*

Synagro is the largest recycler of organic by-products in the United States. Providing essential environmental solutions to over 600 public and private water and wastewater treatment facilities in the municipal and industrial sectors, the Company operates in every part of the nation, including Maryland, and employs more than 800 people nationwide. Synagro's direct land application and reclamation program is a proven, time-tested management approach, ensuring the beneficial use of biosolids and other suitable residuals. Synagro wishes to register its strong **support** for Senate Bill 171.

Senate Bill 171 proposes to amend general public participation and notice requirements for a number of permits that are issued by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) including permits to install, materially alter, or materially extend a structure used for storage or distribution of sewage sludge. The bill authorizes public informational meetings and hearings to be held using teleconference or Internet-based conferencing technology unless federal law requires the meeting or hearing to be held in person or any person requests that the meeting or hearing be held in person and public notices to be posted on the MDE website and other means of electronic communication in addition to in print.

Given the changes in federal public notice rules and public health and safety concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the proposed changes are essential for MDE to enable them to continue to timely process permits while ensuring public notice and participation. In fact, what has been learned during the pandemic is that conducting hearings and meetings using teleconference or Internet-based conferencing technology often provides increased opportunities for the public to engage in the licensing and permitting process and will likely save time and money for both MDE and applicants. A favorable report is requested.

For more information call:

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