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Committee: Environment and Transportation

Testimony on: HB0798 “Community Healthy Air” Act

Position: Support

Hearing Date: February 23, 2022

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club supports HB 798, which will begin to address the failures of some Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO) to control the pollution they send into our air and water. Transported by the air, the ammonia released can have deleterious effects on the surrounding plant life. In the water, the runoff results in algae blooms and oxygen depletion as well as fish kills.¹

In a report on chicken farms, the Environmental Integrity Project found that the Maryland Department of Environment (MDE) inspections had determined that 84% of poultry operations had failed an inspection.² After their extensive study, they recommended that “the state should increase... air monitoring... especially by adding a series of ammonia air monitors.” These operations are not small family farms; MDE defines a CAFO as 1000 or more cattle, 30,000 or more chickens with liquid manure handling, or 125,000 or more chickens with dry manure handling.³

The state must do better to protect our environment from these polluters, and this bill would be a good step in the right direction. We urge a favorable report on HB 798.

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¹ Environmental Protection Agency. “Ammonia” US EPA, United States, 4 Nov. 2015, <https://www.epa.gov/caddis-vol2/ammonia>.

² Environmental Integrity Project, “Blind Eye to Big Chicken,” Environmental Integrity Project, 28 October 2021

³ Land and Materials Administration, Animal Feeding Operation Division, “AFO Size Categories” Maryland, Feb. 2021,

<https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/land/RecyclingandOperationsprogram/Documents/AFO%20Size%20Chart%20rev2.2021.pdf>