



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Marc Elrich
County Executive

February 9, 2022

TO: The Honorable Kumar P. Barve
Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee

FROM: Marc Elrich
County Executive

RE: House Bill 371 – *Environment – Salt Applicator Certification Program – Establishment* – Support

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 371 – *Environment – Salt Applicator Certification Program*, which establishes a commercial salt application program to encourage efficient winter maintenance of roadways, parking lots, and sidewalks by imposing certification requirements on commercial entities that apply salt to these areas.

Salt application is a key component in keeping our roads safe for travel during winter weather and any action taken to reduce the use of salt must not negatively affect the safety of our roads. However, salt is also a contaminant that dissolves in water and negatively impacts our infrastructure, environment, and drinking water supply.

Salt can accelerate the deterioration of concrete and cause corrosion of aluminum and steel that damages vehicles, bridges, roads, stormwater pipes, water and sewer pipes, and buildings. Because of its corrosive nature, salt use can lead to economic concerns by prematurely increasing the maintenance, repair, and replacement costs of these structures.

Excessive salt pollutes the environment in numerous ways. It can deleteriously impact pets, wildlife, plants, streams, and rivers. Among the most worrisome impacts is the increase of salt in surface water that disrupts stream ecosystems in a manner that kills fish and other organisms.

The drinking water supply of Montgomery County is showing a steady increase in the amounts of sodium in the raw water. The drinking water treatment process does not remove salt from the drinking water because the treatment processes that are required to remove salt, such as reverse osmosis, are extremely expensive to implement on a large scale. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends that, for those on severely restricted sodium diets, sodium should

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not exceed 20 milligrams per liter (mg/l). Sodium levels in the Patuxent River and Potomac River reservoirs operated by the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission have been steadily increasing over time, with treated water from the Potomac Water Treatment Plant periodically exceeding 20 mg/l. I have attached two graphs showing the increase of chlorides in the Potomac River and Patuxent River reservoirs.

The County supports the exclusion of local governments that are required to provide salt application training under a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit from the definition of “commercial applicator” in the bill. The following language is from the County’s MS4 permit:

The County is required to develop a Salt Management Plan and one component of the plan is to provide training. The County’s Salt Management Plan shall include a local “Salt Academy” that annually provides County winter weather operator personnel and contractors with the latest training in deicer and anti-icer management, or participation of County personnel and contractors in a “Salt Academy” administered by another MS4 permittee or State Agency.

This bill is an important step forward in protecting the County’s infrastructure, environment, and drinking water from the negative impacts of salt use on our roads, parking lots, and sidewalks. I respectfully request that the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee give this bill a favorable report.

cc: Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee

