House Bill HB0371, Salt Applicator Certification Program

I am Merikay Smith, a resident of Germantown, Maryland and also President of the Seneca Creek Watershed Partners, a nonprofit environmental group. Our watershed encompasses approximately one-third of Montgomery County. I am in favor of this bill to require training of salt distributors.

Although salt is a cheap and convenient substance to use on slippery roads, there are significant non-monetary costs to the excess use of salt. Improved training of people who do salt applications will reduce the excess use of salt without diminishing safety.

Salt corrodes our bridges, pipes, cars, and roads leading to expensive repairs.

More importantly, the cost of salt is its negative impacts to our waterways. The salt on roadways is washed off by rain into streams, sometimes at rates so high that vegetation and wildlife is impacted. Once the salt enters our streams, it can eventually become part of the water we drink.

I happen to have hypertension, a medical condition made much worse by consuming excessive salt. An estimated **1.5 million adult Maryland residents** have hypertension, also called high blood pressure, according to results from the 2015 Maryland Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. Because of excessive road salt, we unknowingly end up drinking salty water, which is very bad for people with high blood pressure or kidney disease.

For more than five years I served on the Board of the Muddy Branch Alliance which has been monitoring the Muddy Branch for salt, a tributary of the Potomac River. For more than a quarter of 2021, chloride levels in the stream were extremely high. Karl Van Neste has led this salt monitoring effort. On a less extensive basis I have taken limited samples from Seneca Creek, which were also high for salt, though less high than Muddy Branch. We hope in the future to have other volunteers participate in a broader effort to determine salt levels for Seneca over time and in various locations. We don't yet have sufficient data to report Seneca Creek's patterns of salt levels.

Proper training and statewide monitoring of salt are important steps to reduce salt in our waterways. We need to know how much salt we are distributing. We see excessive amounts of salt on our roads, piled up at intersections, and along curbsides. To be fair, many of the road crews are already doing a good job but there are others who are less careful. Proper training will help crews know how much is required to create safe conditions, and how to avoid applying excess amounts which creates a different kind of danger – one to our environment, to human health, to our infrastructure.

Training and monitoring are the key to more prudent use of salt; this Bill is an important step in the right direction. I hope you will vote in favor of HB0371.

I've included a photo of Carolyn Taylor, a Maryland resident, sweeping up excess salt from a road near her home.

Picture 2 - Tracking Salt Use

"Sample", Md Salt Use

Date/Time	Action	Reason	Single Lane Miles Covered	Pounds of Salt Used	Pounds / Single Lane Mile
1/8/2022 14:00	Salt	Ice Storm	280	50000	178.57
1/3/2022 22:00	Salt	Clearing Roads	280	45000	160.71
1/3/2022 8:00	Brine	Impending snow storm	325	15000	46.15

Picture 3 - Uncovered Salt Dumps, at 9513 Key West Avenue, Rockville, MD January 18, 2022

Thank you