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Testimony in Support of
House Bill 847 – Anaerobic Digestion Workgroup
Environment and Transportation Committee
Economic Matters Committee
March 1, 2023

The Rural Maryland Council supports House Bill 847 – Anaerobic Digestion Workgroup.

This bill will establish an Anaerobic Digestion Workgroup to study, identify, examine, and make recommendations on certain aspects of anaerobic digestion.

Anaerobic digestion is a biological method to create renewable energy, in the form of methane (CH₄)–enriched biogas, from organic rich substrates, such as manure, food waste, and wastewater sludge. The Rural Maryland Council has been working to develop more relationships with farmers and institutional systems in support of the use of anaerobic digestion. There are currently a handful of active anaerobic digester systems in Maryland and the findings from this Workgroup may lead to greater support and buildout of these beneficial systems.

In 2013, ECOCORP, Inc. completed the construction of an anaerobic digester facility at the Eastern Correction Institution in Somerset County. The anaerobic digester supplies a portion of the power needed at the prison. The digester uses heat to deodorize and sterilize manure, while using the methane gas it produces to generate electricity.

In 2018, the Department of Agriculture awarded a \$1.85 million grant to Kilby Farm, LLC in Cecil County to install an anaerobic digester at its 400-dairy operation. The project represents a retrofit to an existing, but non-operational, digestion system that created a reliable power supply for the farm throughout the year. A digester can benefit farmers as it can provide a new source of income for them - biomethane, electricity, heat, and biofuel can be sent to the department of energy to be sold to other farms. Additionally, the use of cow manure in the methane digester reduces the greenhouse gas emissions that would otherwise be produced in livestock operations.

In 2021, Bioenergy Development Company completed the construction of an anaerobic digestion facility on the Maryland Food Center campus in Jessup. This is largest anaerobic digester in the state and has the potential to divert approximately 125,000 tons of food wastes generated per year from landfill disposal and produce enough energy to power 4,800 homes. In addition to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and creating renewable energy, it will also improve Maryland's recycling processes and create up to 50 new jobs.

The Council supports and encourages anaerobic digestion technology to benefit farmers, institutional systems, and the environment. The Rural Maryland Council respectfully requests your favorable support of House Bill 847.

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) is an independent state agency governed by a nonpartisan, 40-member board that consists of inclusive representation from the federal, state, regional, county and municipal governments, as well as the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. We bring together federal, state, county and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to identify challenges unique to rural communities and to craft public policy, programmatic or regulatory solutions.

“A Collective Voice for Rural Maryland”