



HB991 - Industrial Sludge Utilization Permit – Establishment
Hearing Date: February 28, 2024

Position: FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce and Members of the Environment & Transportation Committee:

Waterkeepers Chesapeake respectfully requests a FAVORABLE report on HB991, which prohibits a person from utilizing industrial sludge in the State without a permit. The permit program proposed to be administered by the Maryland Department of the Environment addresses deficiencies in the State's approach to industrial sludge management that prevents the content of sludge from being well understood, encourages overapplication of sludge to land, and violates federal and State law.

Maryland has become a dumping ground for Dissolved Air Flotation (DAF) material, the sludge that's left over from industrial protein rendering. While often used as an agricultural soil amendment, overapplication to land and poorly controlled storage and handling of DAF subjects nearby farmers and residents to unbearable odors, insects, human health impacts, and the threat of polluted runoff reaching our waterways.

While Delaware and Virginia require a permit to utilize industrial sludge, Maryland does not. As a result, Maryland has become a profitable place for the material to go—and it's more than we can handle. The sludge is either land applied or held in expansive storage tanks, often without clear knowledge of what's in it. As much as half of the region's industrial sludge has been spread on Maryland land in recent years, according to a University of Maryland study.

The permitting program established by HB991 puts Maryland on par with neighboring states that administer similar programs and closes a significant loophole that allows Maryland waters and communities to be harmed. For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on HB991.

Contact:

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