



Maryland Farm Bureau

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February 26, 2024

To: House Environment and Transportation Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

RE: **Support with Amendments HB991 Environment - Industrial Sludge Utilization Permit – Establishment**

On behalf of the member families of the Maryland Farm Bureau, I submit written testimony of favorable with amendments to HB991. This bill would establish an industrial sludge utilization permit, prohibit a person from utilizing industrial sludge in the state without a permit, require the Department of the Environment to provide certain notices and information to certain persons, apply certain provisions of law regarding public notice and participation to industrial sludge utilization permits, and authorizing a representative of the Department to enter and inspect any site where industrial sludge is utilized.

Maryland farmers are faced with ever changing input costs, leading to the need for alternative soil amendments that may be more cost effective. The most common soil amendment used by Maryland farmers is Dissolved Air Flotation residuals (DAF). Maryland farmers have found that this material is a cost-effective alternative to commercial fertilizer. DAF residuals are tested and regulated as a registered soil amendment with the state chemist. It has a lower nutrient content than both commercial fertilizer and chicken litter (manure) and must be applied according to a farmer's nutrient management plan submitted, approved, and verified by the Maryland Department of Agriculture through the Annual Implementation Report (AIR).

The industry recognizes that there are certain issues associated with DAF, particularly the smell. Industry partners are addressing these issues through research on coverings, chemical additives, and misting. We believe that the long-term solution to this issue will be the widespread implementation and use of various new technologies, including anaerobic digestion, whereby DAF residuals are mixed with organic matter and converted into clean, renewable natural gas. Our member families understand and stress the importance of being a good neighbor and representative of agriculture in the state.

Maryland Farm Bureau supports the amendments that the Maryland Department of Agriculture have submitted and have been accepted by the sponsor. We believe that HB991 helps work towards a solution where farmers in Maryland do not lose an approved agricultural practice, but also keeps being a good and responsible neighbor in mind.

Maryland Farm Bureau Supports HB991 with Amendments

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tyler Hough', written over a horizontal line.

Tyler Hough
Director of Government Relations

Please contact Tyler Hough, (443) 878-4045 with any questions