

House Bill 991

Environment - Industrial Sludge Utilization Permit - Establishment

Date: February 28, 2024

Position: FAVORABLE

To: House Environment and Transportation Committee

From: Cheryl Lewis, Talbot County

I **SUPPORT** HB 991 which establishes regulations and a permitting program for use of industrial sludge. This bill will set a precedent for MDE inspection of facilities utilizing sludge and require more transparency to the public regarding sludge operations in the state.

Unregulated Dissolved Air Flotation (DAF) practices are ravaging the Eastern Shore. Under the guise of “ag use”, DAF from seafood and chicken processing and municipal wastewater plant sludge from outside of Talbot County was dumped in heaping mounds, permitted to sit in the open, rotting from exposure, with unregulated runoff entering our waterway. You can’t imagine the putrid smell, only to be accompanied by clouds of little black midges sprawling over the landscape.

With a background in government and wastewater treatment, I am familiar with municipal operation regulations. What’s happening in my community, and in many others, is wrong, and people are looking the other way.

It should not be up to every individual county to regulate this storage or to individual citizens to fight corporate attorneys.

The University of Maryland predicts more than half of Maryland’s DAF supply is coming from out of state. When it’s cheaper for producers to haul in their sludge from Delaware and Virginia (which require sludge spreading permits), it’s clearly a state issue. The MDE and MDA need to regulate how this material is being stored and applied, not citizens suffering from the consequences.

I urge the Committee’s FAVORABLE report on HB 991.