

February 26, 2024

Re: Testimony against HB991

Dear Chairman Korman and Members the Environment and Transportation Committee,

Thank you for taking the time to look carefully at the proposed HB991. I am Nelson Oberholtzer and work in Caroline County and work with the farmers in the area. I see there is a lot of misinformation and exaggeration being pushed as facts through Facebook and news organizations. The proposed legislation is repetitive and not needed, the farmers in the area that spread DAF get their soil tested for nutrient levels and microbial activity, and then use the results to adjust their nutrient management plan to get the maximum yield from their crop. This is all already regulated by Maryland's Department of Agriculture.

I'm afraid this legislation is just a stepping stone for those who move into agricultural communities from outside suburban areas to suddenly control farming practices. All by the smell emitted only a few days a year during the short spreading window while crops aren't planted.

The storage of DAF isn't directly acknowledged in the legislation but is what has brought this essential circle of nutrients into the public eye. It is fascinating to hear the exaggerated accounts of how this DAF sludge smells so dreadful (in my experience, it can be only smelled when applied to fields and for up to two days after and also when standing directly beside the storage tank/pit). Complaints about the truck traffic (which is part of any modern ag community). And the worry about the health and environmental effects of DAF storage which has been studied and approved by the state department of agriculture and uses the same storage and equipment which is used for manure.

I don't support this legislation and ask that you "nip this in the bud" if you will. It lacks definite rules and is very vague in language, leaving farmers worried that they may be in violation of rules that can change at the stroke of a pen. Add that to the fact this falls under the environmental committee, the fines and penalties are serious.

Making rules based on assumptions and people's delicate sense of smell is reckless. Your farming community asks that you be far more informed of all aspects of the legislation than a few loud and misinformed constituents.

Thank you for reading this and I hope there can be a conclusion reached that keeps everyone happy!

In closing I ask that the committee vote against HB991 and any amendments brought forward by the sponsors.

Sincerely,
Nelson Oberholtzer