

MD House Bill 991

I submit this testimony in favor (FAV) of HB 991.

Susan Hardinger
1147 Humbert Schoolhouse Road
Westminster, MD 21158

My family and I have sought assistance from our state and county elected officials and from our Maryland Departments of Agriculture and Environment for relief from the harmful effects of the industrial waste being hauled into our community and dumped on farm ground. My concerns center on one operation which stores and spreads this waste in two areas of our county. I live one mile west of the headquarters of this "farming" operation on Humbert Schoolhouse Road, and my family's farm is one mile east of this outfit. There is also hauling, storage and spreading of this waste at a second Carroll County location run by this same group.

I've been told by elected representatives and by MDA officials that my concerns about this operation are not valid because "Right-to-Farm" standards apply here. Wrong. This is not a "Right-to-Farm" issue nor is this dumping a common, recognized farming practice. This is hazardous waste storage and dumping, not farming. We are farmers ourselves; we care deeply about our land, our water, and our community's quality of life. We defend ourselves and other farmers when our "suburban" neighbors complain about farming practices which are protected by Right-to-Farm standards. We educate others about agricultural practices which may sometimes inconvenience our community. But HB991 is not about common farming practices. It seeks to impose reasonable regulations on the storage and dumping of this industrial sludge.

We need HB991 to become Maryland law as a start toward protecting our state's citizens, our water and our land from the practice of dumping this material under the guise of "nutrient management." If this stuff is so beneficial for the crops grown on our farmland, and, if it is safe for our groundwater and surface water, why are these waste generators paying "farmers" to store and dump it? Why are these processors paying big bucks to have the stuff hauled hundreds of miles away from the plants that produce it? Why aren't the farmers and landowners near

these factories clamoring to spread the stuff on their own land? Why is it necessary for our state to be the dumping ground for this hazardous material?

Our concerns center on contamination and degradation of our surface water, our creeks and streams and ponds, as well as our groundwater. The huge tank trucks hauling this stuff pour it into manure holding pits or dump it directly onto the ground. The soil cannot hold this volume of liquid waste, particularly when it is poured directly onto the ground. At the bottom of the slopes on which this liquid is indiscriminately dumped are streams, wetlands and ponds.

I've been told that this dumping is allowed on farms which have nutrient management plans. Who's checking compliance with the plans, who's testing the soil and water affected by this dumping and runoff? What happens when this "farmer" denies access to MDA inspectors? What about their spreading on land not covered by nutrient management plans, such as all the acreage now controlled by our Amish friends and neighbors. Amish owned acreage is not covered by nutrient management plans, but now some of these acres are covered by the waste this particular "farming" operation is being paid to take.

There are also serious quality of life issues which matter in our community – a lot. The awful stench when this stuff is hauled past our homes, when it's dumped and spread, seriously affects our neighborhood. It is surely unhealthy for humans and animals for this unrelenting, overpowering smell to hang over our neighborhood for weeks at a time. And our community is seriously affected by the volume of traffic from these huge tank trucks. Our roads were not built for this. Though we know these are public roads with no legal weight and size restrictions for vehicles, the noise, stench and speed of these vehicles are very concerning and, at times, Humbert Schoolhouse Road has been blocked in both directions by these tank trucks as they line up to dump their loads.

Please pass HB991 to start the process of regulating the hauling, storage and dumping of this industrial sludge. Next step will be to ban the waste from our state completely. A good first step however will be the successful passage – and enforcement – of HB991.