



Testimony in SUPPORT of HB234

February 5, 2024

Dear Chairman Korman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT** of **HB234** on behalf of ShoreRivers. ShoreRivers is a river protection group on Maryland's Eastern Shore with more than 2,500 members. Our mission is to protect and restore our Eastern Shore waterways through science-based advocacy, restoration, and education.

This bill will increase the minimum fine from \$100 to \$1,000 for someone who fails to submit to the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) a summary of their nutrient management plan or their annual implementation report (AIR).

We support this bill because we believe more needs to be done to ensure compliance with nutrient management plans (NMP). According to MDA, **"The NMP program has been operating in the same way for over 20 years and there remains substantial non-compliance."**¹

MDA's website states that "the Nutrient Management Program protects water quality in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries by ensuring that farmers and urban land managers apply fertilizers, animal manure and other nutrient sources in an effective and environmentally sound manner." However, MDA reported in summer 2023 during a public meeting in Talbot County on updates to the Nutrient Management Program that **about 26% of farmers were in noncompliance with their plans or the reporting requirements.**

A growing water quality and public nuisance concern in Maryland is the land application of DAF ("Dissolved Air Flotation," derived from animal mortality and processing facilities) sludge. It was determined in the University of Maryland's 2023 Animal Waste Technology Fund report that Maryland has become a regional dumping ground for DAF, and a lack of consistent tracking of information on annual implementation reports results in an uncertainty of how much DAF is being safely applied and according to NMPs.²

The rivers on the Eastern Shore are surrounded by 60% agricultural land and are impaired primarily from nutrient runoff from those farms. Given the significance that Nutrient Management Plans have in protecting water quality, we **support MDA's efforts to increase compliance with those plans through HB234.**

Sincerely,

Matt Pluta

Choptank Riverkeeper on behalf of ShoreRivers:

¹ Maryland Department of Agriculture Nutrient Management Planning Producer Task Force Final Draft Report, 2023. Page 3. Source:

https://mda.maryland.gov/resource_conservation/counties/MDANMPTaskForceFinalDraftReport15_Nov2023%20%282%29.pdf

² University of Maryland's Animal Waste Technology Fund Report, 2023. Page 21. Source:

https://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/2023-10/Final.Report.AWTF_Assessment.pdf

ShoreRivers

Isabel Hardesty, Executive Director

Annie Richards, Chester Riverkeeper | Matt Pluta, Choptank Riverkeeper

Ben Ford, Miles Wye Riverkeeper | Zack Kelleher, Sassafras Riverkeeper