

Maryland Defense Research Coalition (MDRC)

191 Main Street, Suite 310

Annapolis, MD 21401



March 24, 2025



The Honorable Marc Korman, Chair
Environment and Transportation Committee
250 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Senate Bill 253 - Controlled Hazardous Substance Facility Permit - Research Facilities -
Chemical Warfare Material Requirements - **FAVORABLE**

Dear Chairman Korman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tom Albro, and I currently serve as the Chairman of the Maryland Defense Research Coalition (MDRC). I am also a former President of the Army Alliance and former U.S. Army Chemical Officer.

MDRC wishes to express its continuing support for Senate Bill 253, previously heard in the House as House Bill 62. We note that the legislation has been extensively amended in response to recommendations made by former opponents of the bill. These recommendations placed a focus on public health and safety in the area surrounding the laboratory facility located on the Edgewood area of the Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG). We are confident, with the support of the Maryland Department of the Environment, that the bill as amended fully addresses the concerns that have been expressed.

Both the Army Alliance and the MDRC support the overall mission of APG and both organizations are advocating for Senate Bill 253. The language change in this bill is necessary for the United States Army to continue to explore new and innovative chemical and biological defense technologies, in order to protect both our warfighters and the security interests of our nation. During the past 100 years, Aberdeen Proving Ground has grown to become the primary focus of research and development for the United States Army. APG is one of several military installations in Maryland that are vital instruments of our nation's defense. It also provides a significant benefit to the economy of the State of Maryland. Senate Bill 253 addresses the need to modernize Maryland public policy in our environmental laws, in recognition of the evolving mission of APG for our national defense.

Approximately 30 years ago, Maryland enacted a series of statutes intended to protect our environment during the necessary process of the destruction of large quantities of chemical agent stored at APG. The U.S. no longer has large stockpiles of the chemical weapons that were created during the early part of the 20th century but the threat of chemical weapons has not diminished. The Maryland law enacted in the early 1990s had the support of all interested parties, and it has worked well. Today, however, both the times and the circumstances have changed dramatically. Maryland must honor its commitment to protect the environment, and also recognize that APG is dealing with different chemical and biological weapons threats.

The mission of APG has evolved to contemplate new chemical and biological threats to our warfighters and our nation. APG is charged with studying these new threats and developing

means and technologies to mitigate those threats. Their goal is straightforward: to protect our troops and assure our national defense.

Chemical and biological weapons are constantly evolving threat; therefore, it is necessary that APG's vital services be performed without delay. Our warfighters and our forces deployed across the world need this critical research, development and demonstration to be accomplished as quickly as possible.

As a practical matter, the hazardous materials required to conduct studies at APG today are in significantly smaller quantities than those the current legislation addressed. Therefore, the requirements of current Maryland law, which were intended to apply to the destruction of large quantities of chemical weapons, are not applicable to the research, development or demonstration of technologies using significantly smaller quantities of chemical agents.

Senate Bill 253 preserves the current statutory framework for its historic mission of destroying hazardous materials in large quantities, while making a limited exception to these requirements for the evaluation of destruction technologies if done only for research, development or demonstration purposes.

The MDRC supports this modest change in Maryland law. Because of APG's exceptional health and safety record, we are confident that the Army will conduct these activities with the safety of employees, the local community and the environment, foremost among its concerns.

For these reasons, we respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 253, including the amendments that were added in the Senate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Th Albro", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Thomas G. Albro, Chairman
Maryland Defense Research Coalition

cc: The Honorable Brian J. Feldman
The Honorable J.B. Jennings
Bryson Popham, Bryson F. Popham, P.A.
Joan Smith, MDRC Executive Director