

Testimony in Support of HB 909
Environment and Transportation Committee February 26, 2025
Submitted on February 24, 2025

To Chair Korman and Committee Members,

My name is Karen Holcomb. I live in Chestertown, Maryland, with property on the banks of Fairlee Creek and in the midst of farm lands, and I urge a favorable report on HB909. Thank you in advance for your consideration of support of this bill.

As science advances, we know that PFAS in biosolids contaminates soil, ground water, surface, fish and wildlife in and around application sites. This growing contamination threatens the health of Maryland's rural communities by polluting drinking water and food supplies.

Farmers and waste management treatment facilities aren't to blame - they are caught in a system that fails to address the toxic legacy of PFAS chemicals. By implementing these safeguards, we can protect Maryland's food and water resources and endure a healthier future for all. It is time to act - our communities and our communities depend upon it.

MARYLAND PFAS & SEWAGE SLUDGE BILL

Maryland applies nearly 90% of its biosolids to agricultural land, but biosolids containing PFAS — persistent and harmful “forever chemicals”— pose a serious risk to public health and the environment. PFAS enter wastewater treatment plants from industrial, landfill, and household sources, ultimately contaminating biosolids. When spread on farmland, these chemicals pollute soil, groundwater, crops, and wildlife, endangering communities, especially in rural areas like the Eastern Shore. **To address this crisis, Maryland must implement strict PFAS limits in biosolids and mandate testing before land application to protect drinking water, food supplies, and ecosystems from further contamination.**

THIS BILL WILL:

- Help prevent the spread of harmful PFAS chemicals into Maryland's soil, water, and food supply by *requiring testing of biosolids for PFAS contamination at least 14 days before land application.*
- Protect public health and the environment by *requiring the Maryland Department of the Environment to set health-based concentration limits for PFOS and PFOA in biosolids applied to agricultural land.*

This Bill aligns with federal, state, and Maryland-specific initiatives aimed at addressing PFAS contamination. It is consistent with federal actions such as the designation of PFOS and PFOA as hazardous substances under CERCLA (2024), the establishment of maximum contaminant levels for PFAS in drinking water (2024), and the EPA's Draft Risk Assessment on PFAS in biosolids (2025). It also mirrors initiatives in nearly a dozen states that have implemented or proposed PFAS monitoring requirements and restrictions on biosolids. Additionally, it builds on Maryland's legislative efforts, including the George “Walter” Taylor Act (2022) and the Protecting State Waters from PFAS Pollution Act (2024), as well as the Maryland Department of the Environment's PFAS Action Plan and biosolids testing initiatives.

Allowing biosolids with PFOS and PFOA above 1 ppb poses long-term health risks and will require costly remediation efforts. This bill proactively protects Maryland's drinking water, food supply, and environment from harmful PFAS contamination, ensuring public health and reducing future cleanup costs.

There are 98 biosolids land application permits covering over 2,700 acres of farmland in the Maryland — 28% of the permits covering 45% of the permitted land is on the Eastern Shore.

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

- Prevent PFAS-contaminated biosolids from contaminating Maryland's food, water, land, fish, and wildlife.
- Know exactly the amount and type of PFAS in biosolids prior to land application.
- Save the state's funding needed in the future for drinking water protection and environmental cleanup.

WHO WE ARE

ShoreRivers protects Maryland's Eastern Shore waterways through science-based advocacy, restoration, education, and engagement.

As a leading voice for water quality, our advocacy work is fundamental to creating system-wide change to abate pollution and protect our rivers and creeks.

CONTACT

Matt Pluta,
Choptank Riverkeeper
mpluta@shorerivers.org
443.385.0511 ext 203

