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SB 719 Sewage Sludge – Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances – Regulation

Committee: Education, Energy and Environment Committee

MGPA Position: SUPPORT

The Maryland Grain Producers Association (MGPA) respectfully submits this testimony in **support** of Senate Bill 719. Maryland's grain farmers are committed to producing safe, affordable food while stewarding our land for future generations. SB 719 advances these goals by promoting science-based limits on PFOA and PFOS in biosolids for application to agricultural land.

Biosolids have long been used as an affordable nutrient source and MGPA supports the continued safe use. Emerging research on per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) underscores the need for careful, data-driven management. SB 719 establishes clear thresholds for PFOA and PFOS concentrations in sewage sludge intended for land application, including prohibiting application above specified levels and requiring monitoring, source tracking, and mitigation planning when concentrations exceed defined action thresholds. These PFAS substances are subject to EPA drinking water standards after thorough scientific review.

The bill's requirement for ongoing sampling, 12-month averaging of PFOA and PFOS measurements, and technical assistance for mitigation planning ensures that regulatory decisions will be grounded in measurable data rather than assumptions. This commitment to data and monitoring is essential for farmers, who rely on predictable and evidence-driven standards when making long-term land management decisions.

Importantly, SB 719 also recognizes the need to identify and control upstream sources of PFOA and PFOS through required source tracking studies and pretreatment measures. By focusing on source reduction rather than solely restricting agricultural land application, the bill supports a comprehensive, science-based solution that addresses contamination at its origin while protecting working farmland from unintended impacts.

Protecting farmland is not only an environmental priority but an economic one. Grain production in Maryland relies on preserving productive acreage and maintaining soil quality for corn, soybeans, wheat, and barley. Contamination concerns can reduce land value, limit crop marketing opportunities, and undermine public confidence in Maryland agriculture. Establishing clear, enforceable PFOA and PFOS standards and mitigation pathways helps safeguard farmland viability and ensures continued consumer trust in crops grown on Maryland soils.

MGPA also appreciates that the bill allows for adaptive management approaches, including blending and mitigation planning under regulated conditions to reduce PFOA and PFOS concentrations below actionable thresholds. This flexibility reflects an understanding that science and treatment technologies are evolving, and it encourages innovation while maintaining protective guardrails for agricultural land and water resources.

In sum, SB 719 promotes a balanced, science-based framework that protects Maryland farmland, supports responsible nutrient management, and addresses PFOA and PFOS concerns through monitoring, source control, and practical mitigation strategies. By grounding policy in measurable data and emphasizing upstream solutions, this legislation helps ensure that farmers can continue to steward their land productively and sustainably for generations to come.

For these reasons, the Maryland Grain Producers Association respectfully urges a **favorable report** on Senate Bill 719.