



## Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 719 Sewage Sludge – Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances – Regulation

February 20, 2026

Thank you for this opportunity to submit testimony in **SUPPORT** of **SB719** on behalf of ShoreRivers. ShoreRivers is a river protection organization on Maryland's Eastern Shore with more than 2,000 members. *Our mission is to protect Maryland's Eastern Shore waterways through science-based advocacy, restoration, education, and engagement.*

### **This bill protects Maryland's farms, rural communities, and local rivers by:**

1. **Establishing enforceable PFAS concentration limits for land-applied sewage sludge**, whereas sewage sludge (biosolids) may not be applied to agricultural or marginal land if total PFOS + PFOA concentrations are **50 parts per billion (ppb) or greater**. Sludge between **25–50 ppb** may only be land applied under strict temporary conditions and mitigation requirements.
2. **Requiring monitoring and standardized testing** by which sewage sludge generators must test for PFOS and PFOA at least quarterly (or more frequently as required), using certified laboratories and approved analytical methods, with results averaged over the preceding 12 months.
3. **Creating mandatory source tracking and mitigation plans** if PFAS concentrations reach or exceed 25 ppb. The generator must conduct a source-tracking study to identify contributors and develop a mitigation plan to reduce PFAS levels below 25 ppb.
4. **Strengthening industrial pretreatment authority** by authorizing The Maryland Department of the Environment and local pretreatment programs to establish local discharge limits and enforce controls on industrial users contributing PFAS to wastewater systems.
5. **Limiting and regulating blending practices**. Blending sludge to dilute PFAS concentrations is temporarily allowed only under strict monitoring, notification, and compliance requirements, and must ultimately achieve concentrations below 25 ppb.
6. **Adding safeguards for land application**. Temporary applications (25–50 ppb) are subject to reduced loading rates, Class B setback requirements, additional well protections, and consultation with nearby jurisdictions and landowners.

**ShoreRivers supports this bill because it directly addresses one of the most significant pathways of PFAS contamination on Maryland's Eastern Shore: the land application of sewage sludge.** PFOS and PFOA are persistent “forever chemicals” linked to cancer, immune suppression, and developmental harm. Wastewater treatment plants are not designed to remove PFAS, so these chemicals accumulate in biosolids that are then spread on farmland where they can leach into groundwater, contaminate drinking water wells, enter crops, and ultimately reach rivers and the Chesapeake Bay.

### **ShoreRivers**

Scott Budden, Executive Director

Annie Richards, Chester Riverkeeper | Matt Pluta, Choptank Riverkeeper

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



There is growing scientific and on-the-ground evidence connecting sludge application to environmental contamination. ShoreRivers' own soil sampling on an Eastern Shore farm field with a history of sludge application detected elevated PFOS and PFOA levels. Maryland has also issued fish consumption advisories for multiple species due to elevated PFAS levels, including species commonly found in Eastern Shore waterways. **Mapping advisory locations alongside sludge application permits reveals concerning overlap, underscoring the urgency of preventing further contamination at the source.**

This bill takes a balanced but firm approach: it sets clear concentration thresholds, requires testing close to the point of land application, mandates source tracking when contamination is elevated, and empowers regulators to reduce PFAS loading from industrial contributors. **By preventing highly contaminated sludge from being spread on farmland and requiring mitigation when PFAS levels rise, the bill protects agricultural soils, drinking water, wildlife, and downstream waterways.** This aligns squarely with ShoreRivers' mission to protect and restore the Eastern Shore's rivers through science-based advocacy and proactive pollution prevention before contamination becomes irreversible and far more costly to remediate. For these reasons, we urge a **FAVORABLE** report from the committee.

Sincerely,

**Matt Pluta, Choptank Riverkeeper** on behalf of:

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