

Written Testimony in Support of HB 1621 Wastewater Treatment Plants – Monitoring and Reporting Requirements

Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Prachi Tyagi, and I am a student in Maryland. I am writing to respectfully express my support for House Bill 1621, which would strengthen monitoring, reporting, and accountability requirements for wastewater treatment plant discharges.

Maryland's waterways are central to the health of our environment and communities. Rivers and streams across the state eventually flow into the Chesapeake Bay, one of the most important and sensitive ecosystems in the country. Protecting these waters requires strong oversight of pollution sources, including wastewater treatment plants that discharge treated effluent into nearby waterways. HB 1621 strengthens this oversight by requiring the Maryland Department of the Environment to monitor wastewater discharges for certain substances and establish bacterial action levels that can trigger additional response when contamination reaches concerning levels.

Improved monitoring is a critical part of responsible water quality management. Without consistent monitoring and clear thresholds, harmful pollutants and bacterial contamination can go undetected or unaddressed for extended periods of time. Establishing action levels provides regulators with a clear framework for determining when water quality is at risk and when intervention is necessary. Strong monitoring standards help ensure that wastewater facilities operate in a way that protects public health, aquatic ecosystems, and the long-term restoration goals for the Chesapeake Bay.

HB 1621 also promotes transparency by requiring the Department of the Environment to create a publicly available and searchable database containing monitoring and discharge information. Access to reliable environmental data allows communities, researchers, and local leaders to better understand the condition of their waterways and hold polluters accountable. Transparency strengthens public trust in environmental governance and supports informed policy decisions at both the local and state levels.

Another important component of the bill is the restriction on certain wastewater treatment plants participating in the Water Quality Trading Program. While trading programs can sometimes help achieve pollution reductions, they must be carefully structured so they do not allow facilities to avoid addressing pollution at its source. Requiring facilities to meet clear environmental standards before participating in these programs helps maintain the integrity of Maryland's water quality protections.

Maryland has made significant commitments to improving water quality and restoring the Chesapeake Bay, but continued progress requires strong policies that prioritize monitoring, transparency, and accountability. HB 1621 represents an important step toward ensuring that wastewater discharges are properly monitored and that environmental data is accessible to the public.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to give House Bill 1621 a favorable report.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Prachi Tyagi
Student, Maryland