

FAVORABLE TESTIMONY – HB1621

Wastewater Treatment Plants – Discharges – Monitoring, Reporting, and Requirements

House Environment and Transportation Committee

March 13, 2026

My name is Mary A. Taylor and I am a Baltimore County resident and community environmental advocate who has spent years monitoring issues associated with the Back River and Patapsco Wastewater Treatment Plants and their impacts on surrounding communities and waterways.

I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of HB1621.

Communities living near major wastewater treatment facilities have experienced firsthand the consequences of treatment failures, bypasses, and excess discharges. In recent years, Maryland has seen significant operational failures at some of its largest treatment plants, resulting in millions of gallons of partially treated or untreated wastewater entering the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

When these incidents occur, the public often struggles to obtain clear and timely information about what has been discharged into local waterways and whether it poses risks to public health or the environment.

HB1621 takes an important step toward addressing this problem by strengthening monitoring requirements and improving transparency regarding wastewater discharges.

The bill requires the Maryland Department of the Environment to monitor effluent discharged from wastewater treatment plants for emerging contaminants such as PFAS, bacteria, and hormone-disrupting compounds. Expanding monitoring is important because many wastewater systems were designed decades ago and were not intended to remove many of the contaminants now commonly present in municipal wastewater.

These contaminants can include pharmaceutical residues, personal care product chemicals, microplastics, industrial compounds, endocrine-disrupting chemicals, antibiotic residues, and antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

In addition, continued monitoring of nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus remains critical. Excess nutrient discharges contribute to harmful algal blooms and degrade water quality throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Nutrient enrichment can also create ecological conditions that lead to nuisance insect outbreaks. In communities surrounding Back River and nearby tidal waterways, residents have experienced large-scale midge infestations, which significantly affect quality of life for surrounding neighborhoods.

HB1621 also improves transparency by requiring wastewater treatment plants to publicly post monitoring data following bypasses, overflows, or treatment failures. For communities living near these facilities and downstream waterways, access to timely and accurate information is essential.

The bill's requirement for a publicly searchable database of monitoring and discharge information will also improve long-term transparency and accountability. Citizens, researchers, and policymakers will be able to review discharge data and better understand plant performance over time.

The operational failures at Maryland's largest wastewater facilities in recent years, particularly at the Back River Wastewater Treatment Plant, became a statewide concern. The severity of those failures drew the attention of federal regulators and resulted in enforcement actions requiring significant

corrective measures.

Maryland taxpayers have invested billions of dollars in wastewater infrastructure and Chesapeake Bay restoration efforts. Protecting those investments requires strong monitoring standards, transparency, and accountability.

HB1621 represents a practical step toward ensuring that what leaves Maryland's wastewater treatment plants does not undermine the health of the Chesapeake Bay or the communities that live along its waterways.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the committee to give HB1621 a favorable report.

Mary A. Taylor
Baltimore County, Maryland
Community Environmental Advocate

Contact Information:
Email: maryataylor13@gmail.com
Phone: 410-493-4023