



**Testimony, Favorable with Amendments, Senate Bill 719
Sewage Sludge – Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances – Regulation**

March 31, 2026

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony requesting a **favorable with amendments** report on SB 719 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 the region's waterways through science-based advocacy, restoration, education, and community engagement.

ShoreRivers supports this legislation because it begins to address one of the most significant pathways of PFAS contamination on the Eastern Shore: the land application of sewage sludge on farmland. PFOS and PFOA are persistent "forever chemicals" linked to cancer and other serious health impacts. These substances enter wastewater treatment plants through industrial discharges and everyday household products, yet treatment systems are not designed to remove them. As a result, PFAS accumulate in biosolids, which are then applied to farmland as a low-cost fertilizer. Once land-applied, PFAS can be taken up by crops, leach into groundwater, contaminate drinking water wells, and ultimately reach rivers, creeks, and streams impacting both ecosystems and local seafood.

Over the past several years, ShoreRivers has actively engaged on this issue by working with farmers to collect samples, partnering with researchers to better understand PFAS fate and transport, and advocating for stronger protections for rural communities. We have been particularly concerned to learn that a single farm field may receive biosolids from multiple wastewater treatment plants across Maryland and even from out of state. This creates a complex and largely invisible network of commingled waste streams, driven by disposal convenience rather than environmental safety, and poses a significant risk to the health of Eastern Shore communities.

ShoreRivers supports the Senate version of the bill and strongly supports the provision requiring notification to farmers (identified as "owners and operators") of PFAS concentrations in the biosolids they receive. However, as currently drafted, this requirement is triggered only when PFAS concentrations exceed 25 parts per billion (ppb), which significantly weakens its effectiveness and is inconsistent with notification standards in neighboring states such as Virginia. We respectfully request an amendment to make farmer notification an independent requirement, ensuring that farmers are informed of any detectable level of PFAS. Farmers deserve clear, transparent information to make informed decisions about what is applied to their land.

For these reasons, ShoreRivers respectfully urges the Committee to issue a **favorable with amendments** report on SB719. This legislation represents a critical step toward reducing PFAS contamination at its source, protecting farmland and drinking water, and safeguarding the health of rural communities. Strengthening the farmer notification provision will ensure transparency and empower those most directly affected to make informed decisions. We appreciate your leadership on this issue and stand ready to work with the Committee to advance a final bill that delivers meaningful, lasting protections for Maryland's environment and communities.

Sincerely,
Matt Pluta, Choptank Riverkeeper

ShoreRivers

Scott Budden, Executive Director

Annie Richards, Chester Riverkeeper | Matt Pluta, Choptank Riverkeeper

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

shorerivers.org | 443.385.0511 | info@shorerivers.org