



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Senate Bill 719

Sewage Sludge – Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances – Regulation

Date: April 2, 2026

To: Environment & Transportation Committee

Position: FAVORABLE W/ AMENDMENT

From: Gussie Maguire,
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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 719** which regulates and restricts the use of sewage sludge containing certain concentrations of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), specifically perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS) and perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), which are already regulated in drinking water. CBF joins others within the environmental community in requesting an additional amendment requiring notification to farmers (owners and operators) of PFAS concentrations in the biosolids they receive.

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a class of chemicals which break down very slowly in the environment and have toxic and carcinogenic effects on biological organisms. PFAS chemicals accumulate in tissues of soft-bodied organisms like worms and clams in the aquatic and marine environment and are further magnified through the food chain to higher order organisms such as fish and crabs. In at least 20 of Maryland's waterways, the Department of the Environment has issued fish consumption advisories for PFAS.

Wastewater treatment facilities collect PFAS chemicals from a variety of products used by Maryland residents every day, including shampoo, makeup, and cleaning products. Unlike many other contaminants, PFAS cannot be removed from wastewater by conventional treatment processes, meaning that these chemicals remain in liquid effluent and processed solids left at the end of treatment. These solids, otherwise suitable for agricultural purposes after treatment, can result in high concentrations of PFAS at the application site.

The delivery pathway of these chemicals via agricultural practices is of particular concern, as field runoff flows from agricultural ditches and drainage structures to surface waters without filtration. Therefore, testing and regulating application of sewage sludge is a critical step towards keeping PFAS out of Maryland's waterways and food systems. Paired with PFAS product phase-outs required by SB 686, SB 719 will help stop the continued deposition of these forever chemicals in Maryland's soil and water.

The environmental community strongly supports the Senate version of the bill, with one critically important amendment: requiring notification to farmers (owners and operators) of PFAS concentrations in the biosolids they receive. **This notification should not be tied to the bill's 25 ppb threshold, but instead should stand as an independent requirement** so 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. Virginia is currently advancing legislation that includes farmer notification provisions, and Maryland should do the same. The goal of this effort is clear: to protect the public health of our food, soils, and waterways.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on SB 719.

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at mstegman@cbf.org.

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 200,000 members and e-subscribers, including 71,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.