

**Testimony OPPOSING HB395/SB371**  
**Water Pollution Control-Discharge Permits-Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations**  
**House Environment and Transportation Committee**  
**Submitted Monday February 9, 2026**

To Chair Korman and Committee Members,

My name is Karen Holcomb. My husband and I have a parcel waterfront on Fairlee Creek, Chestertown Maryland. I urge an opposing report on HB395/SB371

- **HB395/SB371 is an attempt to solve a problem caused when Maryland's Department of Environment failed to reissue the CAFO General Permit on time.** The delay created a backlog of seven (7) poultry growers who cannot move forward with financing or construction. **A general permit is still required before animals can be placed on site.** As a result, farmers could complete construction and, if MDE fails again to renew the general permit, the farmers remain unable to generate income- placing small business owners in an extremely vulnerable position.
- **Rather than addressing this administrative failure directly, MDE has endorsed the repeal language passed in a 2019 law that clarifies animal feeding operations must have a permit in hand before construction begins.** Essentially HB395/SB371 rolls back a legal requirement and deregulates the CAFO industry allowing a facility to be built without going through the Clean Water Act Discharge Permit process with requirements in place that are intended to reduce the negative impact of potential construction practices on the environment in causing pollution or other harm to our waterways.
- On the Eastern Shore the poultry business is influential on our water quality. It is well known that the poultry business is dominate in both the growing of poultry and that the majority of the grain is grown for the feeding of poultry. Our waterways suffering from agriculture, we can say, is directly tied to the poultry business. Attached is a map of Delmarva which shows the locations of the poultry farms.
- **HB395/SB371 IS NOT THE SOLUTION: Maryland law** states that a person must hold a discharge permit before building modifying or operating any facility that could release pollution into water. This requirement has always applied broadly to industrial and commercial facilities. While, at the end of the day, both the poultry business and the environmental advocates want to be able to trust in the compliance accountability of the MDE in general, and specifically, MDE compliance that allows for a strong action general CAFO permit, HB395/SB371 as proposed in not achieving this objective.

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Thank you for your consideration, and I look to this committee **to OPPOSE HB385/SB371 for the above reasons.**

Sincerely,  
Karen Holcomb  
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