



Testimony in SUPPORT of HB1621 - Wastewater Treatment Plants - Discharges - Monitoring, Reporting, and Requirements

Environment & Transportation
Friday, March 13, 2026

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the committee:

Arundel Rivers Federation, Clean Water Action, and ShoreRivers, otherwise known as “Team Septic” support HB1621. These organizations strongly support the intent of this bill and the measures it proposes to strengthen protections for both the environment and public health.

Over the past two decades, Maryland has made significant progress in addressing pollution from the wastewater sector. However, continued improvements in monitoring, transparency, and accountability are necessary to ensure that wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs) operate in ways that safeguard public health and the environment.

The proposed legislation would introduce several important reforms to the wastewater sector, including:

1. Increasing transparency and accountability regarding sanitary sewer industrial pretreatment permits, which currently remain largely inaccessible to elected officials and the public.
2. Incorporating numeric “bacterial action levels” into WWTP effluent monitoring to protect communities from episodic discharges, with immediate public notification whenever those levels are exceeded.
3. Making existing bacteria monitoring data publicly available and providing clear notifications that explain bypass events and their potential environmental and public health impacts.
4. Establishing stricter criteria for the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) when determining which facilities may generate nutrient trading credits, particularly considering cumulative pollution impacts during periods of permit noncompliance.
5. Implementing practices aimed at reducing harmful and nuisance odors originating from wastewater treatment plants.

Strong monitoring systems are essential for protecting water quality. Expanding monitoring efforts will help the state better understand the presence of pollutants, respond more effectively when issues arise, and identify emerging threats to waterways and communities. Daily bacteria monitoring and reporting are feasible, and the Department has already begun publishing some of this data. Requiring daily publication of bacteria levels would significantly improve transparency compared to the current system, which relies on monthly reporting to a federal database with delays of several months.

“Team Septic” looks forward to working with the sponsor, MDE, and other stakeholders to support and strengthen the bill in the near future. We would be happy to provide specific amendments if the committee is interested.

Sincerely,

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