



## Maryland Farm Bureau

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February 10, 2026

**To:** Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

**From:** Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

**RE:** **Support of SB371 Water Pollution Control - Discharge Permits - Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations**

On behalf of the over 7,000 member families of the Maryland Farm Bureau, I submit written testimony in support of SB371 – Water Pollution Control – Discharge Permits – Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations. This bill removes restrictive language that currently requires a person to hold a Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) general discharge permit before beginning construction on any part of a new facility.

The Maryland General Discharge Permit for CAFOs expired on July 7, 2025. This five-year permit governed wastewater discharges from large poultry, dairy, and livestock farms statewide until its expiration. With the permit now expired, Maryland is in the process of finalizing a new, updated General Discharge Permit. Until that process is complete, existing CAFOs continue to operate under an administrative extension, and no new CAFO permits can be issued.

As a result, farmers who need to modernize, expand, or construct new facilities are effectively stalled, even though the state has not yet provided a permit pathway. SB371 offers a practical solution by allowing construction to begin without waiting for the issuance of the new general permit, while still requiring farmers to obtain a CAFO permit before any animals are housed or any operation becomes active. This bill does not remove or weaken the requirement that every CAFO must secure a valid permit before operation. It simply clears a bottleneck that currently prevents farmers from preparing their farms for future compliance.

It is also important to recognize that CAFOs play a vital role far beyond broiler operations on the Eastern Shore. Many dairy farms, cattle operations, and other livestock producers across Maryland are regulated as CAFOs and would benefit from this commonsense update. The current delay affects farmers in every region of the state, not just poultry growers.

Allowing construction to move forward ensures that Maryland farmers are not forced into financial hardship, missed timelines, or lost investment opportunities due to a permitting gap outside their control. SB371 supports environmental compliance, agricultural competitiveness, and regulatory fairness.

For these reasons, Maryland Farm Bureau respectfully requests a favorable report on SB371.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W. Ray', with a horizontal line above it.



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