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Susan O'Neill, Chair

Charlotte Davis, Executive Director

February 11, 2026

The Honorable Marc Korman
Environment and Transportation Committee
250 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Testimony in Support of House Bill 395 - Water Pollution Control - Discharge Permits - Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

The Rural Maryland Council supports House Bill 395 - Water Pollution Control - Discharge Permits - Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations. This bill clarifies Maryland law regarding discharge permits for concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) by removing the requirement that a general discharge permit be obtained prior to the commencement of construction. House Bill 395 maintains all existing water pollution control standards while ensuring that agricultural producers are not subject to duplicative or premature permitting requirements before a facility is operational.

By aligning the timing of permitting with actual discharge risk, House Bill 395 supports Maryland's agricultural community, particularly in rural regions where livestock and poultry operations are central to the local economy. For many farm families, especially on the Eastern Shore and in other rural counties, upfront permitting requirements can delay projects, increase costs, and create uncertainty for lenders and contractors. This legislation helps streamline the process while preserving the State's authority to regulate discharges once an operation begins and is subject to environmental oversight.

This approach is not only beneficial for individual producers but also strengthens rural economies more broadly. Agriculture supports thousands of jobs in processing, transportation, equipment sales, construction, and feed supply. When farmers can modernize or expand their operations efficiently, it stimulates economic activity throughout surrounding communities. Reducing unnecessary regulatory barriers can help ensure that Maryland farms remain competitive with operations in neighboring states, preventing the loss of agricultural investment and jobs across state lines.

Furthermore, House Bill 395 reinforces a balanced regulatory framework by maintaining environmental protections under Maryland's Water Pollution Control laws while improving clarity and predictability in the permitting process. By preserving water quality standards and enforcement authority, the bill allows the State to continue protecting local waterways and the Chesapeake Bay, while also recognizing the operational realities faced by farmers. This measured adjustment promotes both environmental stewardship and agricultural viability, ensuring that rural Maryland can remain economically strong and environmentally responsible for the long term.



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For these reasons, the Rural Maryland Council respectfully requests your favorable support of HB 395.

Sincerely,

Charlotte Davis
RMC Executive Director