

March 10, 2020

SB 841: Water Pollution Control – Discharge Permits – Industrial Poultry Operations

Bill Sponsor: Senator Lam

Committee: Education, Health and Environmental Affairs

Testimony: Margaret Barnes, Moms Across America Eastern Shore

Position: Support

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Committee Members,

My name is Margaret Barnes and I am a former resident Salisbury, MD. Before my family moved to the Lower Eastern Shore five years ago, I understood that chicken factory farms smelled. What I didn't know was how toxic and dangerous the air emitting from these CAFOs was until it affected my health and that of my son. Despite our history of excellent health, we developed chronic sore throats and headaches, suffered severe respiratory illnesses, and our breathing, no matter what time of year it was, became more difficult. I soon realized that we had the most trouble when the stench coming from the Perdue Processing Plant, less than a mile from our house, was the strongest. So I began to research. I discovered that:

1. According to the CDC, health effects of CAFO air emissions include headaches, respiratory problems, eye irritation, nausea, weakness, and chest tightness. (CDC 2010)
2. And when you smell something bad from a CAFO, you are indeed breathing a mixture of airborne contaminants which have been linked to asthma and bronchitis (CDC 2010), such as ammonia, aluminum sulfate, hydrogen sulfide, particulate matter, and pathogens (University of Minnesota 2016; Heederik et al., 2007)
3. I learned that children, like my son, take in 20-50% more air than adults, making them much more susceptible to lung disease, asthma, and allergies (Kleinman, 2000).
4. And, not surprisingly, 1 in 4 middle schoolchildren in Wicomico County have asthma, which is TRIPLE the national average of 1 in 12 children under 18.
5. In Maryland, Wicomico and Somerset Counties have the highest rates of lung disease and lung cancer AND they have the highest number and density of CAFOs (MDH Cancer Study 2017). How is it we live in an area with the highest levels of asthma, lung disease, and lung cancer and we still don't have a single air monitor on the entire Lower Eastern Shore? How can anyone claim the air is safe?
6. Delmarva Poultry industry will blame this public health crisis on smoking but have zero research to back it up. They might even go so far as to cite a review by an agricultural

college extension office suggesting that asthma rates are actually LOWER near CAFOs. But that is not REAL science, that's BOUGHT science. Why would anyone trust an air study in which they can control where, when, and how the data is collected and interpreted?

As a mother, it's my job to make sure our food is healthy and our water is safe to drink, but I have ZERO control over the quality of the air my child breathes.

We need a moratorium now.

Thank you,

Margaret Barnes