

March 4, 2020

HB 1312: Water Pollution Control - Discharge Permits - Industrial Poultry Operations

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Stewart

Committee: Environment and Transportation

Testimony: Margaret Barnes

Position: FAVORABLE

Thank you for your attention to House Bill 1312. The chicken industry continues to negatively impact our right to clean air, water, and health. It fouls the air we breathe with massive fans spewing out a concoction of over 400 compounds, including ammonia, particulate matter, hydrogen sulfide, and viral and bacterial pathogens. Wicomico County has some of the highest rates of emergency department visits due to asthma. In fact, the Lower Eastern Shore not only has the highest levels of childhood asthma but also lung disease, and lung cancer in Maryland. Yet there is *still* not a single air monitor on the *entire* Lower Eastern Shore.

Respiratory issues are extremely common. Before my family moved to the shore, we rarely, if ever, got sick. Yet immediately after our move, we came down with sore throats and noses that would only go away when we came back to Annapolis. My son suffered respiratory illnesses for the three years we lived in Salisbury, MD and it was the main reason why we decided to move back to this side of the bay. It's been one year exactly since we left the shore and my son hasn't been sick, not once.

It's no secret that chicken industry is very powerful here in Maryland. It's big business, heavily subsidized, and it almost always gets its way. Since I was a little kid growing up on the Rhode River, the chicken industry always managed to get most politicians to kick the can down the road when it came to bay pollution. For those of us who grew up on the water, "taking action" really meant just throwing money at another study as a delay tactic. It's an old political game and we are sick of it.

Please consider supporting this bill. Our children deserve clean air and water.

Thank you for your time,

Margaret Barnes

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