



Welcome back to **The Hotline**! Every Friday during session, we'll keep you informed about crucial hearings and bills affecting Maryland's agriculture. Stay tuned to find out how you can help us ***strengthen and grow agriculture in Maryland!***

WHAT WE'RE WORKING ON

Thank You! Thanks to our amazing grassroots members, we have had **nearly 200 contacts** made with our elected officials in opposition to **SB0193/HB0357, the Cage-Free Egg Mandate**. Your contributions are making a real impact in Annapolis!

Action Alert : Don't let up on the gas pedal! With the house version of the bill with a scheduled hearing soon, **your voice is needed**. If you haven't done so already, easily **write your elected officials** on SB0193/HB0357 with just one click, [here!](#)

Don't forget: We'll be seeing many of you next week for our **Day in Annapolis** on **February 7th!** Check your inbox for more information.

WHAT WE'RE MONITORING

SB 0056/HB 0163: Food Waste and Solid Waste Reduction – Grants, Fund, and Surcharge Sponsored by Senator Hester | Senate Hearing: 2/6/24 at 1:00 PM

Establishing the On-Farm Organic Diversion and Composting Grant Program to award grants to eligible entities to assist with the costs of developing and implementing on-farm composting and compost use, food waste prevention, and food rescue projects; requiring the Department of the Environment to use funds from the Reduce, Recycle, Remanufacture Fund to support the Grant Program to Reduce and Compost School Waste; authorizing the Department to establish a statewide solid waste disposal surcharge; etc.

Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Support

We support SB0056 in its efforts to provide funding for On-Farm Organic Diversion and Composting. Managing waste is important to farmers and supporting the implementation of on-farm composting is beneficial to the farmer and surrounding environment.

SB 0178/HB 0022: Agriculture – Pollinator Habitat Plan – Requirements for State Highway Administration

Sponsored by Delegates Ruth, Ebersole, Foley, Guyton, Hill, Lehman, McComas, Palakovich Carr, Pasteur, Pena-Melnyk, Solomon, Taylor, Terrasa, Wu, and Ziegler | House Hearing: 2/7/24 at 2:30 PM

Requiring the State Highway Administration's pollinator habitat plan to include policies and procedures regarding the use of pollinator habitat areas along State highways; requiring the Administration to track and evaluate federal programs that provide funding for pollinator habitats, native plants, and invasive species control and to apply for any funding that the Administration determines beneficial to pollinator habitats; requiring the Administration to update the plan each year; etc.

Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Support with Amendments

We look to support SB0178/HB0022 with pending amendments from the bill sponsor that ensure farmers can continue management practices on invasive and noxious weeds. This bill in theory has the potential for positive impacts but it is worth monitoring for any potential requirements on pesticides for farmers located around these habitats. Ensuring the proper management of invasive and noxious weeds is an agricultural priority in this bill. We do not want farmers in Maryland to lose the ability to manage their land with sound agricultural practices.

HB 0233/SB 0306: Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area Protection Program – Climate, Equity, and Administrative Provisions

Sponsored by Delegate Korman | House Hearing: 2/7/24 at 2:30 PM

Authorizing the Critical Area Commission to adopt regulations governing the transfer of development rights, fee in lieu payments, the assessment of and adaption to climate change relevant to the critical area, enhancing resilience in the critical area, and environmental justice and equity initiatives; establishing certain considerations of climate change, resiliency, and equity as general principles and minimum elements of local programs; etc.

Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Monitor

We consider this bill worth monitoring. This bill may have the ability to change the agriculture buffer zones for the critical area. This bill does not reference that change but Maryland Farm Bureau will continue to monitor.

HB 0447/SB 0440: Income Tax Credit - Venison Donation

Sponsored by Delegates Ziegler, Allen, and Ruth | House Hearing: 2/8/24 at 1:00 PM

Allowing an individual, subject to certain requirements and limitations, to claim a credit against the State income tax for certain qualified expenses if the individual harvests an antlerless deer and donates the deer meat to certain organizations; and requiring by January 31 each year, each venison donation program that received certain donations to report to the

Comptroller the name and address of donors intending to claim the tax credit and the number of deer donated by each donor claiming the credit.

Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Support

We support of HB0447 and SB0440 for their positive contributions to wildlife management. This bill would allow certain individuals to claim a credit against the state income tax if an antlerless deer is harvested and donated to certain charitable organizations. This bill can alleviate some of the taxes incurred on family farms and encourage donations of deer meat to venison charities.

HB 0234/SB 0278: Department of Agriculture - Licensing, Registration, Fees and Penalties, and Regulation

Sponsored by Delegate Korman | House Hearing: 2/7/24 at 2:30 PM

Altering and establishing renewal and reinstatement processes for horse establishment licenses; establishing certain duties and administrative penalties with respect to beekeeping activities; altering the administrative penalty structure for certain violations related to nutrient management plans; and altering the renewal process and fee structure for the registration of weights and measures.

Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Support with Amendments

Maryland Farm Bureau now supports this bill with amendments. This bill creates possible changes in regulatory oversight of the nutrient management program. We support the amendment to extend the implementation date of this bill from 2024 to 2026. Allowing farmers more time to adapt to the new changes presented in this bill.

WHAT THEY'RE WORKING ON

State of the State: Governor Moore will deliver his second annual **State of the State** address next week on **Wednesday the 7th at noon**. (The same day as our Day in Annapolis! State House should be busy so prepare travels accordingly). You can watch the Governor's address live on [MPT](#).

Lawsuit watch: Baltimore Business Journal's **Matt Hooke** reports that a [newly filed lawsuit](#) could prevent the awarding of new cannabis licenses in Maryland, which has already been delayed by a month.

Any persimmon farmers reading this?: Sen. Arthur Ellis recently [introduced legislation](#) to name persimmons as the Maryland state fruit.

WHAT WE'RE MESSAGING ON

As voted upon our members at our annual convention, one of their top issues was **wildlife management**.

In light of **HB0447** being heard, which we're proud to support, here are a few reasons **why proper wildlife management is so important in Maryland**:

Maryland faces a staggering overpopulation of deer which contribute to increased **crop damage, Lyme disease, and vehicle strikes.**

The problem is so bad that the **National Park Service** has even [encouraged hunting](#) in the national capital region.

Crop damage from wildlife remains one of the biggest threats to Maryland's farmers. [It's estimated](#) that deer cause about **\$50 in damage per acre**, which could add up to **\$55 million statewide**

Legislative action is needed to address this critical issue

That's why we're proud to support [HB0447](#) for its positive contributions to wildlife management

It's even sponsored by **Delegate Ziegler**, a grain farmer and MDFB member herself!

Our **policy book** states that "Maryland Farm Bureau supports increased and expanded measures to manage nuisance wildlife on agricultural lands."

It's not just about hunting either, MDFB is proud to support **Farmers and Hunters Feeding the Hungry** and the **Maryland Food Bank** through venison donations.

Thank you for reading **The Hotline**! For questions about policy, contact MDFB's Director of Government Relations, Tyler Hough, at tylough@marylandfb.org. For questions relating to this publication, contact our Director of Communications, Jeb Burchick, at jburchick@marylandfb.org.

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MARYLAND FARM BUREAU®, INC. is a 501(c)(5) federation that serves as the united voice of Maryland farm families. Our organizational strength comes from the active participation of over 9,500 individual and family members who belong to the state's 23 local county Farm Bureau organizations. Since 1915, Maryland Farm Bureau has been committed to protecting and growing agriculture and preserving rural life. Maryland Farm Bureau is a proud member of the American Farm Bureau® Federation. For more information, visit www.mdfarmbureau.com

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