



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!**

Looking for a previously sent Hotline? They're now available on [our website!](#)

WHAT WE'RE WORKING ON



Day in Annapolis Wrap-Up: Thank you to all of our members who attended our **2024 Day in Annapolis** – our event was attended by nearly 100 farmers and over 30 legislators! Click the above photo to learn more and check out our [Bill Briefing sheet](#) to get caught up on all that was discussed.

Lessons Learned: Secretary Kevin Atticks noted to us an unfortunate problem – some legislators support policy that runs counter to agriculture

NOT because they hold animosity towards our industry, but ***because they may never hear our side of the issue.***

That's why it's so important to know who [represents you in Annapolis](#), stay in regular communication with them, and ***share your story.***

Remember that we're farmers. We're not flush with cash from special interest groups or the have backing of insincere publicity campaigns.

Our strength lies not in deep pockets but ***in our community and the authenticity of our stories*** – and sometimes that is all you need to make lasting, positive change in our state.

Don't forget: The house version of the **cage-free egg mandate** is being heard **on Wednesday**. If you haven't done so already, don't forget to easily contact your legislators to oppose this shortsighted bill on our [action center](#).

WHAT WE'RE MONITORING

SB0193/HB0357: Agriculture - Confinement of Egg-Laying Hens in Commercial Egg Production - Prohibitions

Sponsored by Delegates Terrasa, Lehman, Allen, Bagnall, Cardin, Embry, Fair, Feldmark, Foley, Holmes, J. Long, McCaskill, Palakovich Carr, Patterson, Pena-Melnyk, Rosenberg, Ruth, Solomon, Stein, Stewart, Wells, Wilkins, and Wu | House Hearing: 2/14/24 at 1:00 p.m

Prohibiting a certain farm owner or operator from knowingly confining egg-laying hens in an enclosure in a certain manner, subject to certain exceptions, on and after January 1, 2026; prohibiting a business owner or operator or a farm owner or operator from selling shell eggs or egg products under certain circumstances on and after January 1, 2026; and specifying that a certain certification verifying that the shell eggs and egg products are produced in a certain manner must be obtained before selling shell eggs and egg products.

Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Oppose

We strongly oppose this bill. This bill negatively impacts our shell egg producers and places pressure on them to convert to a cage-free system. With the strenuous standards in this bill, it is considered a threat to the viability of egg layer operations in Maryland. The economic viability of going cage-free and the biosecurity concerns of HPAI will lead this bill to render more harm than good.

MDFB Policy: *"We strongly oppose any ban of the use of cages in layer operations."*

SB0367/HB0481: Natural Resources - Antlerless Deer Hunting Programs - Authorization

Senator Mautz, Senate Hearing: 2/13/24 at 1pm | Delegate Hutchinson, House Hearing: 2/16/24 at 1pm

Authorizing a person to receive a raffle ticket for each antlerless deer hunted by the person during a certain raffle program that has as its objective the hunting of antlerless deer.

Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Support

This bill would authorize and protect programs like the Lower Shore Doe Harvest Challenge. These programs have been under more scrutiny the past few years, and appear to need a legislative fix to continue. This bill was in last year and got hung up on Sine Die and did not make it through. Maryland Farm Bureau supports the continuation of these programs that make a difference in crop damage and help manage the overpopulation of deer in our state.

MDFB Policy: *"The crop damage and human health issues resulting from the state's overpopulation of deer are of major concern to Maryland's farmers... We urge the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to explore, develop and implement effective, innovative practices to control the deer population in our state."*

SB0392/HB0616: Agricultural Land - Adversarial Foreign Governments - Restrictions on Property Interests

Senator Gallion, Senate Hearing: 2/13/24 at 1:00 p.m | House Hearing: 2/21/24 at 1:00 p.m.

Prohibiting adversarial foreign governments from purchasing, acquiring, leasing, or holding any property interest in agricultural land in the State; and requiring the Attorney General to enforce the Act in a certain manner.

Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Support

We support SB0392 and HB0616. We encourage the utilization of productive farmland to be used by our Maryland Farm families. This bill would prohibit adversarial foreign governments from taking up our already limited supply of land in the state.

MDFB Policy: *"Foreign investment in Maryland assets is a concern. The impact of foreign investment in agriculture, banking, insurance, and other business institutions in the United States should be monitored. Foreign government ownership of utility companies and natural resource businesses, including agricultural land, should be limited to less than a controlling interest. We oppose preferential treatment of foreign investments in agriculture and insist that foreign investors be required to conform to the same tax laws, import and export regulations as American producers."*

SB0589/HB0812: Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland - Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission - Funding
Sponsored by Senators Bailey, Jackson, Benson, Elfreth, Ellis, and Rosapepe | Senate Hearing: 2/14/24 at 1:00 p.m.

Increasing, from \$900,000 to \$1,000,000, the amount of an appropriation that the Governor is required to include in the annual budget bill each year for the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland from the Cigarette Restitution Fund; repealing the termination of certain provisions of law that require the Governor to include the appropriation in the annual budget bill each year and the Council to use the appropriation to fund the activities of the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission; etc.

Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Support

Maryland Farm Bureau supports SB0589 and HB0812. This would increase the funding from \$900,000\$ to \$1,000,000 with an included funding source from the Cigarette Restitution Fund. Funding is an important element of Maryland Agriculture that needs to be promoted and preserved.

MDFB Policy: *"We support the State of Maryland increasing funding to the Tri-County Councils for the purpose of including and funding agricultural and natural resources development in their mission."*

HB0210: Maryland Building Performance Standards – Fossil Fuel Use and Electric-Ready Standards

Sponsored by Delegate Acevero | House Hearing: 2/14/24 at 1:00 p.m

Requiring the Maryland Department of Labor to adopt, on or before January 1, 2025, and as part of the Maryland Building Performance Standards, a requirement that new buildings meet all energy demands of the building without the use of fossil fuels and an electric-ready standard for certain buildings.

Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Oppose

We oppose HB0210. This bill currently has yet to cross-file. HB0210 jeopardizes farm viability in Maryland. It looks to require all new buildings to be electric ready which is not economically feasible for our farmers. Maryland's infrastructure is not equipped to handle electric ready buildings across the state. This bill does not consider Maryland agriculture in its desired objectives.

MDFB Policy: *"We strongly support a comprehensive, long-term energy policy that fully utilizes domestic energy resources and aggressively promotes the access, availability, and affordability for agriculture."*

WHAT THEY'RE WORKING ON

State of the State: From [WBAL](#): "Moore's address on Wednesday focused on making the state safer, more affordable and competitive, as well as a state that serves."

Be aware of: Newly introduced sludge permit bills, introduced by Del. Sara Love and Sen. Justin Ready. More from [The Star-Democrat](#).

Energy News: Josh Kurtz of Maryland Matters [reports that](#), "House leaders prepping legislation to boost Maryland offshore wind...Stung by news that one of the two companies that was planning to install wind energy turbines off the coast of Ocean City is reassessing its projects."

WHAT WE'RE MESSAGING ON

We've heard some disingenuous news recently attempting to place blame on agriculture as the cause of Chesapeake Bay pollution. Here is the truth:

Maryland has been a pioneer of sustainable ag practices,
this includes the widespread usage of **cover crops**

Cover crops help **prevent soil erosion & nutrient runoff**, significantly reducing the amount that reaches the Bay.

According to [2018 data](#), farmers helped **reduce nitrogen losses by 20%** and **phosphorus losses by 44%**

While other states have just begun implementing this practice, **Maryland has been doing it for years** – it was even discussed at MDFB's [convention in 1946](#)!

Every single area in Maryland is required to abide by our **nutrient management plan**

This ensures farmers are applying the correct amount of plant nutrients for optimum yield and minimum impact on the Bay.

Bay pollution comes from many states, including the huge and unfortunate **outsized amount from Pennsylvania**

[Pennsylvania accounts](#) for **44% of the nitrogen load** and **24% of the phosphorus load** to the Bay

The problem is so bad that **Maryland** [filed a lawsuit](#) in light of **Pennsylvania's inaction** and not meeting their shared goals.

It's important to remember that **no amount of legislative action taken in Maryland will reduce pollution coming from Pennsylvania**

Maryland farmers have an incredible stake in the environment,
our entire business model is centered on the **responsible stewardship of the land**

Given our widespread agricultural land preservation

program, it's been proven that ***we deliver on this goal every time.***

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