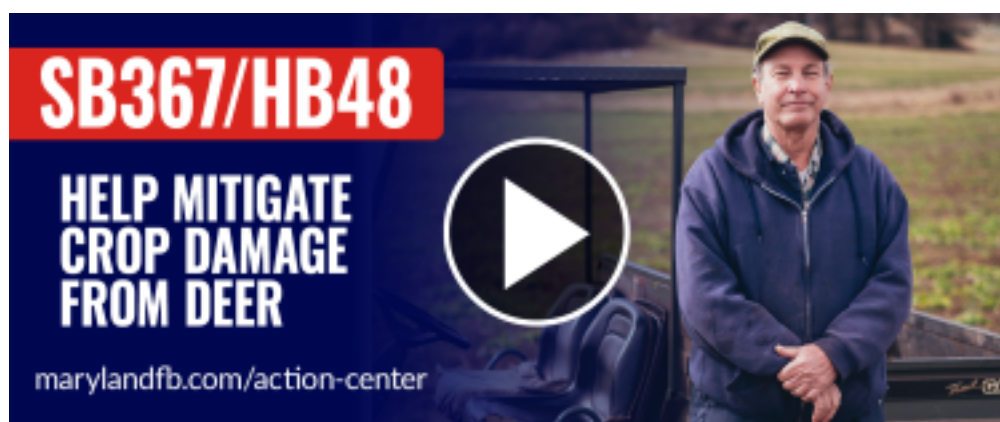




Welcome back to **The Hotline**! Every Friday during session, we'll keep you informed about crucial hearings and bills affecting Maryland's agriculture. Stay tuned to find out how you can help us ***strengthen and grow agriculture in Maryland!***

WHAT WE'RE WORKING ON



PSA on crop damage: We recently produced a PSA with **Bob Chase of Chase's Produce** on the impact of crop damage on his farm, in advocacy for **SB0367/HB048**. Share with your friends on [social media](#) to spread the word.

Thank you: Thanks to you, we have had **over 100 contacts made to legislators** in support of this commonsense bill – your efforts are making a real impact! If you haven't done so already, you can **easily write your legislators** in support of **SB0367/HB048** on our [Action Center](#).

A reminder: Maryland's **Crossover Date** (when bills passed by one chamber move to the other) is in two weeks on **March 18th**. Bills passed before this date have a better chance of becoming law – so our advocacy efforts will be of the utmost importance in the coming weeks. Click [here](#) to learn more.

WHAT WE'RE MONITORING

[HB1421 \(SB0911\):](#) Food, Drugs, and Cosmetics - Gene Structure- and Function-Modifying Products - Labeling

Delegates S. Johnson and A. Johnson | House Hearing: 3/07/24 at 1:00 p.m. | Senate - Hearing 3/07/24 at 1:00 p.m.

Prohibiting a person from offering for sale in the State a gene structure- or function-modifying product unless the product is labeled in a prominent and conspicuous manner with the words "Gene structure- or function-modifying product" and all potential risks, side effects, adverse effects, and other reasonably possible effects that the product may have; and establishing penalties for a violation of the Act.

Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Oppose

Maryland Farm Bureau opposes HB1421 and SB0911. This prohibits and restricts the marketing and labeling of GMO commodities grown in the state. We strongly oppose state mandated labeling of these products and believe only the federal government policy should be utilized on this issue.

MDFB Policy: *"We oppose legislation that would restrict the use of GMO commodities grown in the state. '12 We support GMO policy decisions only at the federal government level and not at the state government level '15 We oppose state-mandated labeling of products made with GMO crops. '15"*

HB1404 (SB1149): Environment – Storage of Dissolved Air Flotation By-Products – Local Authority

Delegate Ghrist | House Hearing: 3/08/24 at 1:00 p.m.

Authorizing a political subdivision to enact a certain local law or ordinance regarding the storage of dissolved air flotation by-products that is equal to or more stringent than the permit requirements for a sewage sludge utilization permit.

Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Monitor

Maryland Farm Bureau looks to monitor HB1404 and SB1149. Maryland Farm Bureau looks to observe how the bill allows local authorities to manage the sewage sludge utilization permit.

MDFB Policy: *"Local agencies should be precluded from enacting regulations governing the use of biosolids that are more restrictive than State standards. '23"*

HB1328 (SB1082): Solar Energy and Energy Storage - Development and State Procurement Senator Hester | Senate Hearing: 3/07/24 at 1:00 p.m.

Authorizing a county to enact a local law creating a conservation and restoration fund for a certain purpose; establishing the Utility-Scale Solar Design and Siting Commission in the Power Plant Research Program to provide recommendations related to solar energy development and land conservation and preservation; requiring the owner or operator of a certain solar energy generating station to plant and maintain a certain cover crop on certain land and submit a certain vegetation management plan to a certain entity; etc.

Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Support with Amendment

Maryland Farm Bureau supports with amendments HB1328 and SB1082. We support further research of agrivoltaic systems and this bill takes steps toward ensuring the land is still productive with the use of cover crops and a vegetation management plan. However, we look to amend certain language to ensure this is not a permanent fix or band-aid solution to the loss of farmland through solar.

MDFB Policy: *"We oppose commercial and community solar energy facilities being considered as an agricultural activity. '22 We support further research of the economic merit of Agrivoltaics and the impacts of increased solar to the energy grid. '23"*

HB1284: Wetlands and Waterways Program - Stream Restoration

Projects Delegate Terrasa | House Hearing: 3/06 at 1:00 p.m.

Repealing an exemption for stream restoration projects from certain application fees for certain projects that impact a wetland or waterway; requiring a person applying for a wetlands and waterways authorization for a stream restoration project associated with achieving restoration goals to include in the authorization application certain objectives, standards, and plans; requiring the Department of the Environment to conduct a certain community engagement process before issuing a certain authorization; etc.

Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Oppose

Maryland Farm Bureau opposes HB1284. We oppose this bill due to restricting and possibly denying exemptions to farmers. We shouldn't be holding farmers responsible for issues that public agencies should be handling. This bill will be adding more hurdles to receive approval from the Department of Environment which goes against our policy.

MDFB Policy: *"The denial of a permit to alter wetlands, by either federal or state government, should be deemed "the taking of private property" and the landowner should be "justly compensated." '22 We recommend that public agencies be held completely responsible for wetlands that they create due to water drainage and/or the re-routing of water as a result of construction of public facilities such as roads, schools, storm water management ponds, parking lots, etc. Cost of litigation to protect the landowner should be borne by the public agency involved. '22"*

SB808 (HB1466): Anaerobic Digestion Technology - Coordination and Guidance Senators Carozza, Gallion, and Hester | Senate - Hearing 3/05 at 1:00 p.m.

Requiring the Department of Agriculture to coordinate with the Maryland Energy Administration, the Department of the Environment, the Department of Commerce, the University of Maryland College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and certain other stakeholders to ensure anaerobic digestion technology projects are not unduly delayed; and requiring the Department, in coordination with certain State agencies, to establish certain guidance for farmers regarding the development and implementation of anaerobic digestion technology.

Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Support

Maryland Farm Bureau supports SB808 and HB1466. We encourage the development and utilization of other alternative energy sources such as anaerobic digestion technology. The bill will help guide farmers through the implementation of this technology in partnership with the Maryland Department of Agriculture.

MDFB Policy: *"We encourage research, development, and utilization of alternative energy sources from methane, biomass, wind, nuclear, solar, hydrogen, hydro, and clean natural gas. '19"*

SB1035: Focusing Federal Career and Technical Education Act Funds on Blueprint School to-Work Apprenticeship Goals Act

Senator Rosapepe | Senate Hearing: 3/06/24 at 1:00 p.m.

Requiring the State Board of Education to collaborate with the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Committee to develop and approve a certain plan; requiring the State Department of Education to administer the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act; requiring the CTE Committee, beginning in fiscal year 2025, to review a certain proposal of the Department; requiring the CTE Committee to allocate funds received under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act; etc.

Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Support

Maryland Farm Bureau supports SB1035. This bill promotes alternative education outlets through the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. Providing career opportunities is important to ensuring the next generation is equipped to handle their future professions.

MDFB Policy: *"We support advancing and implementing The Blueprint for Agricultural Education, as authored by MDFB, Maryland Agriculture Education Foundation, and Maryland Agriculture Teachers Association, as consistent with The Blueprint for Maryland's Future, specifically the Pillar 3, College and Career Readiness initiative. '23"*

HB1165 (SB0969): Stream and Watershed Restoration - Stream Restoration Contractor Licensing and Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Restoration and Funding (Whole Watershed Act)

Senators Elfreth and Guzzone | House Hearing: 3/05/24 at 1:00 p.m.

Establishing the Stream Restoration Contractors Licensing Board; requiring a person to be licensed as a stream restoration contractor or be employed by an individual or entity that is licensed as a stream restoration contractor before the person performs or solicits to perform stream restoration contractor services in the State, subject to a certain exception; requiring the Department of the Environment to provide notice of a certain violation to a stream restoration contractor; etc.

Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Monitor

Maryland Farm Bureau is monitoring HB1165 / SB969 with no position at the moment. Stream and Watershed Restoration is an important piece to the health of the Bay. Maryland Farm Bureau will continue to monitor this bill for the potential effect it could have

on our members.

MDFB Policy: *"We oppose transfer and/or use of funds set aside for agricultural land preservation for anything other than the preservation of farmland. '21"*

HB1042 (SB0932): Maryland Agricultural BMP Best in Show Program -

Established Senator Elfreth | Senate Hearing: 3/08/24 at 9:00 a.m.

Establishing the Maryland Agricultural BMP Best in Show Program to provide and prioritize the use of certain funding relating to agricultural best management practices and to increase the cost-effectiveness and environmental, social, and health impacts of State-funded best management practices in a certain manner; requiring the Department of Agriculture to administer and manage certain competitive grants under the Program in a certain manner; etc.

Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Monitor

This bill would establish the Maryland Agriculture Best Management Practice Best in Show program. This program would provide and prioritize the use of certain funding to agricultural best management practices. Of this bill, 200 million will be transferred from the Bay restoration fund and up to three million will be transferred from the Chesapeake Atlantic Coastal Bays trust fund. This program would be housed in the Maryland Department of Agriculture. Currently, the Maryland Farm Bureau has not taken a position on HB1042 and SB0932 and will continue to track the bill.

SB0589/HB0812: Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland - Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission - Funding

Sponsored by Delegates J. Long, Davis, Harris, T. Morgan, and Wilson | House Hearing: 3/8/24 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."*

HB0991 (SB1074): Environment - Industrial Sludge Utilization Permit - Establishment *Senator Ready | Senate Hearing: 3/05/24 at 1:00 p.m.*

Establishing an industrial sludge utilization permit; prohibiting a person from utilizing industrial sludge in the State unless the person obtains a permit; requiring the Department of the Environment to provide certain notices and information to certain persons; applying certain provisions of law regarding public notice and participation to industrial sludge utilization permits; and authorizing a representative of the Department to enter and inspect any site where industrial sludge is utilized.

Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Monitor

Maryland Farm Bureau looks to monitor HB0991 and SB1074 for possible amendments to its language. We look to limit the restrictions posed on farmers concerning the use of biosolids on farmland. For now, we will monitor the state of this bill and partake in the amendment development process.

MDFB Policy: *"We oppose any legislation that would allow biosolids utilized on farmland to be less restrictive than the standards outlined in MDA's 2012 Nutrient Management Guidelines. Local agencies should be precluded from enacting regulations governing use of biosolids that are more restrictive than State standards. '23"*

HB0024 (SB0096): Environment - Impact of Environmental Permits and State Agency Actions *Senator Jackson | Senate Hearing: 3/05/24 at 1:00 p.m.*

Requiring the Department of the Environment to conduct a climate and environmental equity evaluation regarding the impact of issuing an approval for certain environmental permits; requiring the Department to provide opportunities for residents of the State to opt in to text, phone, e-mail, or regular mail notifications regarding any facility with a pending or final permit approval in or adjacent to the resident's census tract; altering certain reporting requirements for certain State agencies; etc.

Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Support with Amendment

Maryland Farm Bureau supports HB0024 and SB0096 with amendments. Maryland Farm Bureau will advocate for an amendment that protects the CAFOs in our state from being included in this bill.

HB0979 (SB0915): Agriculture - Invasive Plant Species - Regulation (Biodiversity and Agriculture Protection Act) *Senator Brooks | Senate Hearing: 3/05/24 at 1:00 p.m.*

Altering the regulatory approach for controlling invasive plant species in the State, including repealing certain provisions of law relating to a two-tiered regulatory approach and requiring the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a list of prohibited invasive plants by regulation in a certain manner on or before October 1, 2024; establishing certain protocols for assessing

certain nonnative plants and determining whether those plants are invasive or whether the plants may be placed on a certain watch list; etc.

Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: **Monitor**

Maryland Farm Bureau looks to monitor HB0979 and SB0915. We are looking to make sure this bill has sufficient wording that matches our policy and ensures the best management of invasive plant species.

MDFB Policy: *"We urge the state to eliminate from the list those species (threatened or endangered) that might have limited numbers in Maryland but are common elsewhere. '22 Endangered species protection should not go beyond those species protected by federal law. '22 Any plant or animal that is taken because of an agricultural practice shall be considered an incidental taking. '22 We strongly urge the Maryland Department of Agriculture to have phragmites, Rosa multiflora (multi-flora rose) (except when used as rootstock by the nursery industry), Microstegium vimineum (Japanese stilt grass), Amaranthus palmeri (Palmer Amaranth), Asiatic tearthumb (mile-a-minute vine or kudzu), Celastrus orbiculatus (Asiatic bittersweet vine) and Ailanthus (Tree of Heaven) placed on the noxious weed list. '22 We urge the SHA to submit a realistic fiscal impact statement related to adding palmer amaranth to the noxious weed list. '18"*

WHAT THEY'RE WORKING ON

Potential election changes: The Maryland Senate [votes in favor](#) of **special elections** to fill **legislative vacancies**. Currently, legislative vacancies are filled by political party central committees.

Department of Ag on DAF: The **Star-Democrat** [reports that](#) **Secretary Kevin Atticks** says that the Department "is doing 'everything within its powers' to address recent concerns with the storage of [DAF]."

St. Mary's needs state help: According to **St. Mary's County** officials, the county could break ground on a new **regional agricultural center** if the state signs off on the facility's septic plan. More from [The Delmarva Farmer](#).

WHAT WE'RE MESSAGING ON

The **Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA)** released their [Conservation Grants Program 2023 Annual Report](#), here are a few key takeaways that show how **Maryland farmers are leading the way in land stewardship**:

Maryland farmers planted 395,000 acres of traditional cover crops during the 2022-2023 planting season using **grants from MDA**

Maryland farmers also **invested \$281,056 of their own money** into conservation projects in fiscal year 2023

These projects prevented millions of pounds of pollutants from entering Maryland waterways

It's estimated that **2.9 million pounds of nitrogen**, **37,261 pounds of phosphorus**, and **20,695 pounds of soil** we're prevented from entering

waterways thanks to these conservation programs.

Farmers hauled 358,840 tons of manure away from areas with **high soil phosphorus levels** to alternative use facilities.

MDA received 35 urban agriculture and small farm grants to support 152 acres of cover crops.

These stats show that Maryland farmers, working with our partners in government, are providing for a **cleaner and more sustainable Maryland**.

Thank you for reading **The Hotline**! For questions about policy, contact MDFB's Director of Government Relations, Tyler Hough, at though@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