



MARYLAND FARM BUREAU

DAY IN ANNAPOLIS

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 7th, 2024



INFLUENCE. ACTION. IMPACT.

Maryland Farm Bureau depends on champion advocates like you to stand up for policies that affect agriculture in our state. Whether you are a leader or just getting started in Farm Bureau, you can raise your voice to influence policies impacting agriculture. Visiting your legislators and sharing your story is by far the most effective means of conveying your message.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

8:15 a.m. | Morning Reception

8:45 a.m. | Legislative Briefing

10:30 a.m. | Brunch with Legislators

12:00 p.m. | State of the State Address*

**Following the Governor's State of the State Address, bill hearings may be expected*

BILL SUMMARIES ON FOLLOWING PAGES

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Agricultural Policy & Product Marketing:

SB0278 (HB0234): Department of Agriculture - Licensing, Registration, Fees and Penalties, and Regulation

Chair Marc Korman, House Hearing - 2/07 at 2:30 PM | Chair Brian J. Feldman, Senate Hearing - 1/23 at 1:00 p.m.

This is one of the Maryland Department of Agriculture departmental bills this year. It changes the fees, penalties, and regulations on certain programs such as horse establishment licenses, bee hive registration, weights and measures, and nutrient management. 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.

 **MDFB Supports with Amendments**

SB290: Certified Local Farm and Fish Program - Annual Waiver Reports

Chair Brian J. Feldman, Senate Hearing - 1/23 at 1:00 p.m.

This bill would alter the annual deadline, from July 31 to December 31, for the Office for the Certified Local Farm and Fish Program to submit to the Board of Public Works a report of waivers requested and waivers granted under the Certified Local Farm and Fish Program. It would also alter the annual deadline, from October 1 to February 1, for the Board of Public Works to submit to certain standing committees a copy of a record of information regarding any waivers requested under the Certified Local Farm and Fish Program. Maryland Farm Bureau supports SB290. This bill looks to streamline the waiver process for state agencies and universities and make it more efficient by streamlining the reporting deadlines.

 **MDFB Supports**

SB0178 (HB0022): Agriculture – Pollinator Habitat Plan – Requirements for SHA

Delegates Ruth, Ebersole, Foley, Guyton, Hill, Lehman, McComas, Palakovich Carr, Pasteur, Pena-Melnyk, Solomon, Taylor, Terrasa, Wu, and Ziegler, House Hearing - 2/07 at 2:30 PM | Senator Klausmeier, Senate Hearing - 1/31 at 1:00 p.m.

This bill would require the State Highway Administration's pollinator habitat plan to include policies and procedures regarding the use of pollinator habitat areas along State highways. Maryland Farm Bureau looks to support SB0178 and HB0022 with amendments. 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.

 **MDFB Supports with Amendments**

Agricultural Policy & Product Marketing (cont.):

SB0196: Soil Conservation Districts - Small Ponds - Plan Review Fees

Senator Gallion, Senate Hearing - 1/23 at 1:00 p.m.

This bill will allow Soil Conservation to house the small pond plan reviews rather than MDE. Fees in the bill are currently in place, and does not implement new fees. Maryland Farm Bureau supports bill SB0196 to support our local conservation districts. Funds collected under the Act could help support the budget and provide potential pathways for more financial support to the agricultural community. The fees in this bill are not the responsibility of the farmer, but the responsibility of the group that constructed the pond.

 **MDFB Supports**

HB0113 (SB0042): Vehicle Laws - Horse Riding - Helmet Requirement for Minors

Delegates Lehman, Boyce, Foley, Guyton, Hill, T. Morgan, Pena-Melnyk, Ruth, and Terrasa, House Hearing - 2/01 at 1:00 p.m. |

Senator Kelly, Senate Hearing - 1/31 at 1:00 p.m.

This bill would require minors to wear an approved helmet when involved in equestrian riding activities on public land. This bill is also supported by the Maryland Horse Council and Maryland Horse Industry Board.

 **MDFB Supports**

SB0056 (HB0163): Food Waste & Solid Waste Reduction – Grants, Fund, Surcharge

Senator Hester, Senate Hearing - 2/06 at 1:00 PM | Delegate Charkoudian, Hearing Canceled

This bill will establish 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. It would require the Department of the Environment to use funds from the Reduce, Recycle, Remanufacture Fund to support the Grant Program. Maryland Farm Bureau supports 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.

 **MDFB Supports**

Agricultural Policy & Product Marketing (cont.):

SB0193 (HB0357) Agriculture - Confinement of Egg-Laying Hens in Commercial Egg Production - Prohibitions

Senator Lewis Young, Senate Hearing - 1/23 at 1:00 PM | 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 at 1:00 p.m.

This bill would prohibit a farm owner or operator from confining egg-laying hens in a battery cage, on and after January 1, 2026. This bill also prohibits the sale of shell eggs in Maryland from non cage-free producers after January 1, 2026. Maryland Farm Bureau strongly opposes 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 currently has policy that states “We strongly oppose any ban of the use of cages in layer operations.”

 **MDFB Opposes**

HB0109 (SB0281): Natural Resources - Submerged Aquatic Vegetation - Alteration or Removal Requirements

Chair Korman, House Hearing - 1/31 at 2:30 p.m. | Chair Feldman, Senate Hearing - 1/31 at 2:00 p.m.

This bill would modify the ability for those with an aquaculture lease to manage submerged aquatic vegetation on their leases. Maryland Farm Bureau opposes HB0109 and SB0281 for its negative impacts on the aquaculture industry. This bill puts further restrictions and infringes on shellfish leases when it comes to managing their submerged aquatic vegetation. Working with our allies in aquaculture we will continue to seek amendments that would make this bill acceptable but for now remains in strong opposition.

 **MDFB Opposes**

SB0235 (HB0057): Prescription Drug Monitoring Program - Dispensers – Veterinarians

Chair Pamela Beidle, Senate Hearing - 1/24 at 1:30 PM | Chair Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, House Hearing - 1/31 at 1:00 p.m.

This bill would modify the definition of “Dispenser” to include Veterinarians in the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program. Maryland Farm Bureau opposes SB0235 / HB0057 due to its concern that it would put extra monitoring steps on veterinarians. These extra steps would make it more difficult for rural practitioners to comply with the mandate. This bill would have an impact on the sustainability of rural veterinary practices, currently, the majority of the states exempt veterinarians from this monitoring program. Rural practitioners who cannot keep up with these mandates have a higher likelihood of being driven out of the industry furthering the shortage of veterinary care.

 **MDFB Opposes**

Environmental Protection:

HB0150: Vehicle Emissions Inspection Program and Diesel Vehicle Emissions Control Program - Fees and Fines

Delegate Fraser-Hidalgo, House Hearing - 2/01 at 1:00 p.m

This bill would establish a recurring fee on each motor vehicle registered in the State that is granted a waiver from, exempted from, or not subject to the Vehicle Emissions Inspection Program and on certain diesel vehicles. The fees would be deposited in the Maryland Strategic Energy Investment Fund and used to provide incentives to expand electric vehicle ownership and to expand electric vehicle infrastructure. Maryland Farm Bureau opposes HB0150 for any negative impacts it may have on our members. Negative impacts include increasing the cost of any vehicle that is exempt from emissions testing including diesel vehicles. Fees would be used to increase electric vehicle infrastructure which is not up to standards to be utilized by agricultural vehicles and trucks. This would be another fee that Maryland farmers would have to worry about and this fee would never benefit those that are responsible for paying it.

 **MDFB Opposes**

HB0245: Department of the Environment - Fees, Penalties, Funding, and Regulation

Chair Korman, House Hearing - 1/31 at 2:30 p.m.

This is the Maryland Department of the Environment departmental bill that updates fees on on-site sewage disposal permits, individual well construction permits, private dam repair, oil transfer licenses, and others. Maryland Farm Bureau is opposing this bill based off of concerns of precedent that could be set by MDE raising fees on other programs that do not directly affect agriculture.

 **MDFB Opposes**

Wildlife Management:

HB0447 (SB0440): Income Tax Credit - Venison Donation

Delegates Ziegler, Allen and Ruth, House Hearing - 2/08 at 1:00 p.m. | Senators Elfreh, Bailey, Corderman, Hester, Jennings, and Salling, Senate Hearing - 1/31 at 1:00 p.m.

This bill increases the individual income tax credit for those donating deer to programs like “Farmer and Hunters Feeding the Hungry” to \$75. This helps offset the cost of the processing costs for the hunters donating the deer. Maryland Farm Bureau is in 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 charitable venison.



SB0367 (HB0481): Natural Resources - Antlerless Deer Hunting Programs - Authorization

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

This bill would authorize and protect programs such as 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 on crop damage and help manage the overpopulation of deer in our state.



SDAT / Agricultural Tax:

MDFB was involved in a workgroup this offseason that sat down with SDAT to try and find a solution to the massive changes in agriculture support structure assessments. Out of the workgroup has come HB0640 / SB0869, which MDFB is currently going through to determine a position.

MDFB policy on the issue:

- We urge amending the basis for a property tax assessment appeal to include evaluating the proper application of the agriculture use assessment to the total property value.
- We support a 100% tax credit on agricultural buildings including tenant houses.
- Farms operating on-farm food processing, alcohol production, agritourism, and value-added production businesses along with the buildings associated with these activities should be assessed at the agricultural use tax rate

PFAS:

We expect to see a bill dropped this session that will affect pesticides. From what we have been told, the bill would ban any pesticide that has intentionally added PFAS. The way that the bill is currently written, it would effectively ban over 60 active ingredients.

MDFB policy on the issue:

- No PFAS or chemical contaminant regulations should be promulgated at either the state or federal level without conclusive scientific data.

Solar Siting:

MDFB was involved in a solar siting workgroup during the offseason to try and find a middle ground for all involved. The reality of the situation is that solar in Maryland is coming, and the Renewable Energy Goal of 51% renewable energy by 2031 is already legislation. We will continue to work to protect the best soils and to try and encourage placement of solar off of agricultural land the best we can.

MDFB policy on the issue:

- We encourage the use of Brownfields as a means of solar generation in lieu of the use of prime and productive farmland.
- We support further research of the economic merit of Agrivoltaics and the impacts of increased solar to the energy grid.
- We oppose community or commercial solar energy facilities built on class 1 and 2 agricultural soils.