



Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

3358 Davidsonville Road • Davidsonville, MD 21035 • (410) 922-3426

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Colby Ferguson

cferguson@mdfarmbureau.com

(410) 922-3426

Agriculture Wins Big in Annapolis

By: Colby Ferguson, Government Relations Director, Maryland Farm Bureau

Maryland Farm Bureau's Government Relations team worked hard this session to make sure Maryland's agricultural voice was heard. We closely watched 195 bills and submitted testimony on 70 of them; 52 in support of and 18 in opposition. Of the 52 bills we supported, 29 passed out of both chambers and await the Governor's signature in the next few weeks. Some of our priority bills that passed were:

- The creation of a 6-month 88,000-pound live poultry hauling permit to help chicken growers on the Eastern Shore move poultry more efficiently and less costly during the winter months throughout Delmarva.
- The reauthorization of the 88,000-pound milk hauling permit during the spring flush.
- A Deer Crop Damage Permit corrective bill to insure Maryland farmers can continue to address problem deer year-round (including Sundays).
- A Landowner Liability Exemption when leasing ground to hunters.
- A Beehive protection bill to allow a registered bee owner to remove problem bear when they damage beehives.
- Movement of the Seafood and Aquaculture Marketing from DNR to MDA.

In addition to bills we supported, there were 18 bills we opposed that could have negatively affected Maryland agriculture. MFB staff and several county Farm Bureau members worked hard to either kill or amend bills to remove the negative effect on farmers. Some of those priority bills were:

- The Livestock Antibiotics disease prevention ban. MFB, along with a coalition of livestock groups and supporters, amended this bill to conform the disease prevention language to the Federal law that went into effect on January 1, 2017 and also removed the language that would have mandated livestock producers make their private livestock medical records available to the public.
- The Community Healthy Air Act that targeted the Eastern Shore poultry growers died in committee due to a solid showing by our poultry growers and making sure the committee received the correct information on how chickens are grown and air quality inside and out of their poultry houses.
- The Atrazine Study bill was killed in committee again due to a strong showing of our Farm Bureau members and a coalition between the Maryland Grain Producers and MFB to detail the thousands of studies that have already been done since it was first approved in 1959.
- The State-Owned Property Pollinator Habitat Plan ban on the use of Neonicotinoids bill. MFB worked with the bill sponsors and the committees to amend the bill to make sure farmers and their workers were exempt for the restrictions.

Governor Hogan was very fair to agriculture this year in the budget. He increased the funding for the Maryland Ag Cost Share Program (MACS) from \$6 million to \$8 million to help offset the lost funding from last year. This will help Maryland farmers continue to implement the Best Management Practices (BMP's) needed to achieve water quality goals. MALPF and the other land preservation programs received full funding this year along with \$2.5 million in funding for MARBIDCO's Next Generation Ag Land Preservation Program.

As you can see, Maryland agriculture had a great year. Maryland Farm Bureau thanks Governor Hogan and the Maryland General Assembly for making sure Maryland's largest industry was heard and protected.

###

Maryland Farm Bureau is a private, non-profit membership organization. It is controlled by its members through the democratic process and is financed by voluntary membership dues. Its strength comes from the active participation of over 36,000 member families that belong to the state's 23 county Farm Bureaus. For more than 100 years, Maryland Farm Bureau has served to promote and protect Maryland agriculture and rural life.