



# Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

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## **Legislative Benefits of a Farm Bureau Membership**

One of the biggest advantages of being a Maryland Farm Bureau member is the representation from our Government Relations Team. Your job is to farm and produce the best product you can. You don't have the time or energy at the end of your long day to review the hundreds of pending government proposals and determine how they may impact your farm.

Our Government Relations team works tirelessly to make sure government officials at all levels understand the impact that new laws and regulations can have on your farming operation. Without solid, constant representation during the Maryland Legislative Session, many bills that would negatively affect agriculture would slip by without being noticed. During this year's session, we reviewed well over 2,800 House and Senate bills. From those, we targeted nearly 200 as bills to follow and possibly testify for or against to help the agriculture community.

Many of the bills and regulations that we opposed were defeated during the 2016 Legislative session, like the Poultry Litter Management Act (HB599, SB496). This bill would have taken away personal responsibility and decision making authority from farmers and turned it over to poultry companies in the management of poultry litter.

"The Poultry Litter Management Act would have established the poultry companies as mandatory enforcement agents and inspectors for farm Nutrient Management Plans," said Chuck Fry, MFB President. "These plans are already regulated by the state government. We worked with poultry companies, the Administration, Legislative leaders and environmental advocates last year to form the monumental PMT compromise, and this Act would have been a withdraw from the agreed framework."

Maryland Farm Bureau supported two transportation bills this year to benefit our state's farmers. The Gross Vehicle Weight for Agricultural Products bill (HB 486) would have created a 15% tolerance from the gross vehicle weight limits for grain hauling vehicles used to haul grain during harvest time. The Gross Weight and Axle Load for Poultry bill (SB 573, HB 698) would have established a 90,000 pound GVW limit with a 3% tolerance for combination truck and trailers that haul poultry from the farm to the processing facility.

"Although both bills died in committee," said John Draper, MFB Second Vice President, "we are looking forward to working with the Governor, his Administration and legislative leaders to find common ground on these transportation bills for next year's session."

Maryland Farm Bureau opposed the Neonicotinoid Pesticides Ban bill, or Pollinator Protection Act (SB 198, HB 211), which was passed, but we appreciate the legislators who saw the need to remove the unfriendly agriculture language from the final bill. As amended, this bill bans the retail sale and outdoor use of Neonic pesticides by homeowners effective January 1, 2018.

“Maryland Farm Bureau agrees that pollinators need to be protected and their colonies strengthened,” said Colby Ferguson, MFB Government Relations Director. “Unfortunately, banning a single class of pesticides that are actually the safest class of pesticides for both humans and bees will not address the real problem that endangers our apiaries in the state. The Pollinator Habitat bill we supported that passed this year starts the process towards addressing one of the main issues with the death of our pollinators in Maryland.”

We also opposed the Use of Antimicrobial Drugs bill for cattle, swine and poultry (SB 607, HB 829) that died in committee. This bill would have duplicated the restrictions that are going to be implemented through FDA’s regulation that would prohibit the use of medically important antibiotics for growth promotion.

“This would have severely restricted a livestock producer from using common disease prevention methods to administer proper animal husbandry and maintain a healthy heard,” said Wayne Stafford, MFB Vice President. “Because the federal regulation eliminates over-the-counter antibiotic use, this bill would have caused more livestock sickness outbreaks and increased antibiotic resistance, leading to more opportunities of resistant bacteria to enter the food chain.”

Other bills and regulations that we **supported** and were **passed** this year include Distribution of Revenue to fund Program Open Space (HB 462), Aquaculture Coordinating Council Membership to include a representative of Maryland Farm Bureau (HB 051, SB 051), Agriculture Science Education (HB 1297, SB 770) and Calvert and St. Mary’s Counties Deer Management Permit (HB 1417, SB 401). Other bills and regulations that we **opposed** and were **defeated** this year include the Farmers’ Rights Act (HB 1496, SB 761), Use of Antimicrobial Drugs (HB 829, SB 607), Raw Milk Sales (HB 079) and Off-Track Betting Prohibition at Maryland State Fairgrounds (HB 704).

In addition to representing our members in Annapolis, MFB’s Government Relations Team works with the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) to leverage your dues and represent your interests in Washington D.C. AFBF has been recognized as one of the most effective lobbying groups in D.C.

Maryland Farm Bureau is a grassroots organization that includes all types of agriculture from traditional to non-traditional practices. Representation from an organization that allows farmers to determine our policy and direction ensures that Maryland farmers have a seat at the table when it comes to State and National politics. To learn more about Maryland Farm Bureau, visit [www.mdfarmbureau.com](http://www.mdfarmbureau.com) or call 410-922-3426.

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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 the last 100 years, Maryland Farm Bureau has served to promote and protect Maryland agriculture and rural life.