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#6: February 28, 2020

This week in Annapolis was very busy as both chambers scramble to get all the bill hearings completed before the bill crossover deadline of March 16th. Maryland Farm Bureau staff focused on ensuring MFB's voice was being heard on our priority bills such as hemp, local procurement and trailer tags. Next week, the Senate and House committees will be hearing testimony on agricultural education. [Take action here](#) in support of these ag education bills.

The following bills will be heard next week:

Tuesday, March 3, 2020

[SB 562](#) - Public Schools - Flexible Instructional Days - Policy Requirements

Senator Gallion, EHEA at 1:00 PM in 2 West Miller

The bill authorizes a county board of education to apply to the state board of education to implement a policy for the use of up to 5 flexible instructional days during the school year. The bill defines "flexible instructional day" as one in which a public school provides remote academic instruction because a natural or civil disaster or severe weather conditions prevented schools from opening.

For years, school systems have used the 180-day restriction to oppose starting school after Labor Day. This bill would allow a school system to address the snow day issue through flexible school days. Pennsylvania uses this practice in their school system.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy:

- We encourage all local/county boards of education to develop a calendar that starts after Labor Day and ends no later than June 15th.

Maryland Farm Bureau Supports SB 562

SB 986 - Public Schools – Agricultural Education and Grant Programs

Senator Hester, EHEA at 1:00 PM in 2 West Miller

This bill defines a Certified Ag Education program in Maryland public schools and requires local school programs to adopt and use this definition in their existing Ag education programs or when they are creating new Ag education programs. Each local board of education is required to implement an agricultural education program that prepares students for:

- (1) successful careers and a lifetime of informed choices relating to global agriculture, food, fiber, and natural resources systems; and
- (2) a wide range of opportunities in agriculture–related employment and higher education by providing instruction and developing skills in science, math, technology, communications, leadership, and management through integrated:
 - (i) classroom and laboratory instruction relating to agriculture, food, and natural resources;
 - (ii) supervised agricultural experiences (SAE), which may include service or work–based learning; and
 - (iii) leadership experiences and involvement in student organizations with an agricultural focus (FFA).

In addition, the department may award grants to county boards, nonprofit organizations, and other entities to compensate teachers for working extra duty days to enable students to participate in agricultural education programs and activities; provide funding for students who are enrolled in agricultural education courses to pay dues and participate in the Maryland FFA association; provide teacher development and training, including attendance at summer training conferences; and maintain existing agricultural education programs and implement new department–approved agricultural education programs in public schools in the state. The bill requires the governor to include an appropriation of \$785,000 to the program each fiscal year starting in fiscal year 2022.

Maryland Farm Bureau Supports SB 986

HB 772 - Maryland Green Purchasing Committee - Food Procurement - Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Delegate Gilchrist, HGO at 1:00 PM in 240 HOB

This bill requires the Maryland Green Purchasing Committee, in consultation with the Department of the Environment and the Department of General Services, to develop a way to calculate the amount of greenhouse gas emissions food emits in its lifecycle. Then they are to establish best practices for state government procurement to reduce the volume of GHG-intensive foods purchased to the maximum extent practicable as a percentage of

gross food purchases. The Maryland Green Purchasing Committee is: the Secretary of General Services, the Secretary of Budget and Management, the Secretary of Natural Resources, the Secretary of the Environment, the Secretary of Health, the Secretary of Commerce, the Secretary of Transportation, the Secretary of Public Safety and Correctional Services, the Chancellor of the University System of Maryland, the Secretary of Information Technology, the Secretary of Education, the State Treasurer, or the Treasurer's designee.

There is no direction in this bill on how food products will be measured and what impacts this will have on Maryland farmers, especially livestock and poultry producers. In addition, the Department of Agriculture is not on the committee to give an ag perspective. Added this year, was a part to include "grown in healthy soils and reducing food waste."

In July 2019, a summer study committee released a draft list of carbon intensive foods and they were: beef, lamb & goat meat, butter, shellfish, cheese, pork, chicken, cream, fish, eggs, rice and milk. During the summer study, there was no interest in the group drafting the list on where the foods were grown, only on the food's life cycle emissions.

Maryland Farm Bureau Opposes HB 772

Wednesday, March 4, 2020

SB 427 - Baltimore County - Hunting - Deer Management Permits

Senator West, EHEA at 1:00 PM in 2 West Miller

This bill adds Baltimore County to the list of shotgun only hunting counties that would allow the use of a rifle for the harvesting of deer only under a Deer Management Permit. The regular deer firearms hunting season would still remain shotgun only. Currently, Calvert, Charles, Harford and St. Mary's counties have this provision in the law.

This bill will expand our farmers' ability in Baltimore County to utilize another tool in the toolbox in addressing the crop damage inflicted on their crops as a result of foraging deer herds. A Deer Management Permit does not allow nighttime shooting and is only permitted by DNR after DNR confirms crop damage due to deer. The DMP only allows the harvest of antlerless deer and all deer harvested are to be donated to food banks or processed for the farmer's own consumption. There are only 62 DMP's issued in Baltimore County.

Maryland Farm Bureau Supports SB 427

SB 432 - Charles County - Public Safety - Buildings Used for Agritourism

Charles County Senators, EHEA at 1:00 PM in 2 West Miller

This bill adds Charles County to a list of other counties that exempt existing ag structures that are going to be used for agritourism from being required to retrofit the structure with bathrooms, sprinklers and other high occupancy requirements. This exemption allows up to 200 people in the structure. The structure must still adhere to the structural integrity standards as well as entrance and exit requirements.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy:

- Agritourism should be defined as activities conducted on a farm and offered to the public or to invited groups for the purpose of education, recreation, or active involvement in the farm operation.

Maryland Farm Bureau Supports SB 432

SB 979 - Income Tax Credit - Value-Added Processing Expenses

Senator Hester, B&T at 1:00 PM in 3 West Miller

This bill adds the ability for individuals to claim a tax credit for qualified capital expenses used for value-added processing in an amount equal to 25% and capping the amount of credits to be used in any year by the Department of Commerce at \$1,000,000.

Helping farmers add more value to their crops will help keep them profitable in Maryland. The initial costs to further value-add to a farmer's crops is very steep. This bill uses a tax credit to offset those steep costs. Helping the next generation to get into farming will continue to strengthen the future of agriculture in Maryland.

Maryland Farm Bureau Supports SB 979

HB 1312 - Water Pollution Control - Discharge Permits - Industrial Poultry Operations

Delegate Stewart, E&T at 1:00 PM in 250 HOB

This bill prohibits the Department of the Environment from issuing discharge permits to a person for a new industrial poultry operation or for the purpose of extending or expanding an existing industrial poultry operation of over 300,000 poultry a year on or before September 30, 2020.

This bill would eliminate the commercial poultry industry in Maryland. The typical poultry house today grows between 30,000 and 40,000 birds per flock and there are at least 5 flocks grown a year, totaling more than 150,000 birds per year in each house. This bill would eliminate operations of 2 houses or more. The way the bill is drafted, this would also prevent MDE from issuing a new permit when the existing poultry operation's 5-year permit expires. Based on this restriction, this would eliminate commercial poultry operations in Maryland over the next 5 years.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy:

- Regulations imposed on agriculture shall be based on economically sound and scientifically proven research to ensure that agriculture, including livestock and poultry industries, remains viable and continues to be a strong economic base for Maryland.

Maryland Farm Bureau Opposes HB 1312

[HB 1434](#) - Aquaculture Leases - Marking Requirements and Use of Lease - Alterations

Delegate Clark, E&T at 1:00 PM in 250 HOB

This bill clarifies when a newly approved aquaculture lease must have the corner markers installed. It specifies that markers do not need to be installed until the lease area is actually being used. In addition, the bill clarifies that the owner of a lease has 30 days to replace corner markers that get displaced due to named storms, significant northeaster storm events, icing conditions and criminal act of theft or destruction of property in the lease area. Lastly, the bill would require DNR to allow an oyster lease to not have to work their lease during a year where there is no shellfish larvae or shellfish seed available.

Maryland Farm Bureau Supports HB 1434

[HB 1438](#) - Agriculture - Processing of Poultry Litter for Alternative Use

Delegate Jacobs, E&T at 1:00 PM 250 HOB

This bill establishes an alternative use for poultry litter in Maryland and develops a transportation infrastructure to move the byproduct of processing poultry litter off the Delmarva peninsula without taking any money from the Manure Transport Program.

Offering alternative ways to utilize excess poultry litter on the lower shore is a good way to remove the pressure to transport this litter to other parts of the state.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy:

- We support the research and continued development of alternative and renewable energy resources.

Maryland Farm Bureau Supports HB 1438

[HB 1487](#) - Public Schools - Agricultural Education and Grant Programs

Delegate Shoemaker, W&M at 1:00 PM in 130 HOB

See bill summary for SB 986 that's being heard on Tuesday.

Maryland Farm Bureau Supports HB 1487

Thursday, March 5, 2020

[HB 999](#) - Member-Regulated Cooperatives - Establishment (Rural Broadband for the Eastern Shore Act of 2020)

Delegate Sample-Hughes, ECM at 1:00 PM in 230 HOB

This bill establishes a process to allow cooperatives to become member-regulated. The intent of this bill is for a member-regulated cooperative to make decisions about electric rates and additional offerings to members, like broadband, by vote of its board of directors

with input from members. The member-regulated cooperative would then not be required to get approval from the Public Service Commission on these matters. This bill specifically would allow Choptank Electric the ability to provide reliable broadband service to its members through its existing 650 miles of middle-mile fiber. Reliable broadband is necessary for farmers to be competitive with new and emerging technologies.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy:

- We support legislation to allow utility cooperatives to apply for grants in order to extend broadband service to underserved rural areas.

Maryland Farm Bureau Supports HB 999

[HB 1098](#) - Use of Public Funds - Playground and Athletic Field Surfaces - Authorizations, Preferences, and Prohibitions (Safe and Healthy Fields Act)

Delegate Solomon, APP at 1:00 PM in 120 HOB

This bill encourages all school sports fields to return to the use of real grass, rather than artificial turf. State funds would no longer be used to create playgrounds or athletic fields with synthetic surfaces.

Currently, state funds can be used for the construction of fields made from either synthetic or natural materials. This bill would only permit the use of funds for real turf fields. Funding would also be provided for the maintenance of the grass fields, as well as the drainage systems that would be required.

Based the 2017 Census of Agriculture, there are 4,792 acres of turf grass grown in Maryland, an increase of more than 300 acres from the 2012 census. The value of turf grass sales from Maryland farms is more than \$23 million per year. Having an opportunity to increase the demand for natural grass turf is not only better for the environment but also increases the economic opportunities for farmers in Maryland.

Maryland Farm Bureau Supports HB 1098

[HB 1390](#) - Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity - Electric Facilities - Study and Procedures

Delegate Brooks, ECM at 1:00 PM in 230 HOB

This bill adds requirements to the evaluations conducted and notifications made as part of the Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN) process and prohibits a local government from taking adverse actions related to CPCN projects. The Public Service Commission (PSC) is prohibited from requiring a CPCN applicant for a generating station to apply for or receive local zoning approvals and may likewise not deny a CPCN for the same reasons. The bill also establishes requirements for CPCNs for solar photovoltaic (PV) systems and excludes the installation of visual buffering, including vegetative screening and fencing, from the definition of "construction" for purposes of the CPCN process.

This bill strips most of a county's ability to weigh in on where commercial solar facilities can be sited. This bill strengthens the preemption option and forces the PSC to move solar projects forward even if there are significant issues and opposition to the site.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy:

- We oppose the state of Maryland preemption of local and county land use policy for renewable energy generation projects. We do not support commercial solar energy facilities being built on prime and productive farmland specifically priority preservation areas.

Maryland Farm Bureau Opposes HB 1390

Friday, March 6, 2020

HB 1534 - Department of Agriculture - Urban Agriculture Grant Program

Delegate Wells, E&T at 1:00 PM in 250 HOB

This bill establishes an Urban Agriculture Grant Program within the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA), as well as an Urban Agriculture Grant Fund. The purpose of the Urban Agriculture Grant Program is to increase the viability of urban farming and improve access to urban-grown foods. The Urban Agriculture Grant Fund is to provide funds to nonprofit organizations in Baltimore City. The money allocated to the fund is intended to come from a portion of Program Open Space.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy:

- We support and encourage urban farming/agriculture.

Maryland Farm Bureau Supports HB 1534

Maryland Farm Bureau members are urged to contact their legislators and members of the relevant committees in support of Farm Bureau's positions on the bills listed above. To contact legislators and follow important bills, visit Maryland Farm Bureau's [action center](#) and select "key legislation".

Committees & Room Numbers:

Senate: Budget & Taxation (B&T), 3 West Miller; Education, Health & Environmental Affairs (EHEA), 2 West Miller; Finance (FIN), 3 East Miller; Judicial Proceedings (JPR), 2 East Miller

House: Appropriations (APP), 120 HOB; Economic Matters (ECM), 230 HOB; Environment & Transportation (E&T), 250 HOB; Health & Government Operations (HGO), 240 HOB; Judiciary (JUD), 100 HOB; Ways & Means (W&M), 130 HOB

In Other Ag News

Farmers Encouraged to Sign Up for Healthy Soil Grants



Farmers in Caroline, Kent, Queen Anne's, and Talbot counties who are interested in obtaining financial and technical support to establish healthy soil practices on their farms have until March 20th to apply for assistance through their local soil conservation district offices. [More here.](#)

Funding Available for Conservation Partnership Projects Across Maryland

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service is encouraging farmers and forest landowners to submit applications for current Regional Conservation Partnership Program projects available in Maryland. Farmers and forestland owners may apply for conservation funding at any time throughout the year, but funding selections are made at specific times and the 2020 sign-up deadline for RCPP projects is March 20, 2020. [More here.](#)



Trucking Forums Offered



There's still time to register for Maryland Farm Bureau's farm trucking forum in Wye Mills on March 20th. All Maryland Farm Bureau members, farmers, and truck drivers are invited to this forum to discuss the issues facing farmers on rural roads and state highways. [Register here.](#)

"SILO" Film Screening

Maryland Farm Bureau and Nationwide are sponsoring a free screening of the film "SILO". SILO is the first ever feature film about a grain entrapment. Inspired by true events, SILO follows a harrowing day in an American farm town. Disaster strikes when teenager Cody Rose is entrapped in a 50-foot-tall grain bin. The movie screening is on March 26, 2020 from 6-9 PM at North Caroline High School. [More here.](#)



Integrated Weed Management Workshops



A series of half-day workshops will be held in Maryland, Delaware and Virginia this winter for farmers interested in learning how to use integrated weed management (IWM) techniques to control troublesome weeds in their fields. This is the third year for the workshop series which is a collaborative effort between University of Maryland, Virginia Tech and University of Delaware. [More here.](#)

Member Benefit: Caterpillar

When you've got a tight job to get done in the winter, Cat Ag has the compact solution. Save up to \$500 on eligible Cat® mini excavators along with \$250 on select Cat Attachments thanks to your Farm Bureau membership. [More here.](#)

