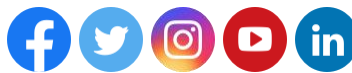




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Hotline #4

February 10, 2023

Welcome to our fourth Hotline of the 2023 Maryland General Assembly session. This week, more than 145 farmers and 66 legislators from across the state attended Maryland Farm Bureau's Day in Annapolis. This event on Wednesday featured a legislative briefing by Maryland Farm Bureau's government relations staff. Following the morning briefing our members attended the House and Senate floor session as well as made office visits. The group met back at the Calvert House and had lunch with legislators from across the state. We would like to thank Farm Bureau members who met with legislators to discuss our priority issues. Finally, we'd like to thank members of the General Assembly, from both sides of the aisle, who took time to attend our event. Click the button below to check out some of our top priority bills from the Day in Annapolis briefing.

[Bill Briefing](#)

In addition to Day in Annapolis, Maryland Farm Bureau testified on several important bills that encompassed areas from urban agriculture to ownership of shotguns by youth and from zero emission medium & heavy duty trucks to on-farm composting. Bill introduction dates have passed and all the on-time filed bills are in. Bill hearings will ramp up quickly over the next few weeks as committees work to hear all introduced bills.

The Hotline will be posted on the [MDFB website](#) each week. Maryland Farm Bureau members are urged to contact their legislators and members of relevant committees in support of Maryland Farm Bureau's positions. Visit Maryland Farm Bureau's [action center](#) to stay up to date on pending legislation on which we have position.

Wednesday, February 15, 2023

SB327: Hunting, Wildlife Conservation, and Outdoor Recreation - Funding, Promotion, Management, Licenses, Permits, and Stamps

Senator Elfreth, EEE at 1:00 PM

This comprehensive wildlife management and hunting bill does many things. First, it cleans up the landowner liability language to ensure a landowner has proper liability coverage if they allow hunters to hunt on their land. Secondly, it establishes the Wildlife Conservation, Education, and Outreach Program to provide outreach and foster an interest in outdoor recreation and stewardship, hunting, and wildlife conservation. Next, it establishes a stamp for hunting sika deer. One of the biggest parts of the bill is it increased the fees for many of the hunting licenses and stamps. These fees haven't been increased in 36 years. The increased fees are to generate the needed funding for DNR to qualify for the available USDA matching funds that the department is currently receiving. These additional funding will allow DNR's Wildlife services division to provide the needed food habitats in Wildlife Management Areas along with starting a farmer cost-share program to plant private land forage crops (AKA sacrificial crops) to help curb the crop loss on farms due to wildlife damage.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy: We commend the efforts of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to assist farmers in controlling nuisance wildlife on agricultural lands. We continue to urge DNR to implement additional programs to limit overpopulations of deer, migratory and resident Canada geese, and other nuisance wildlife in Maryland in order to minimize their negative impacts on agricultural production, highway safety, disease control and the health of the Chesapeake Bay.

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SB447: Anaerobic Digestion Workgroup

Senator Carozza, EEE at 1:00 PM

This bill creates an Anaerobic Digestion Workgroup to study, identify, examine, and make recommendations on the aspects of anaerobic digestion in Maryland. There would be 11 members of the workgroup including a member of the Maryland Farm Bureau. The workgroup will be staffed by MDA and will study this area and make recommendations on the best options for Maryland. These recommendation will be sent to the Governor and the General Assembly by December 30, 2023.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy: We encourage research, development, and utilization of alternative energy sources from methane, biomass, wind, nuclear, solar, hydrogen, hydro, and clean natural gas. Additionally, we urge that this process be aided by appropriate government tax incentives. We support energy generation from all agricultural residues and biproducts to be considered value-added production on a farm.

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HB253: Environment - On-Farm Composting Facilities - Permit Exemption

Delegate Shetty, E&T at 1:00 PM

This bill requires the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to establish an exemption, by regulation, from the permitting requirements under the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 26.04.11.06 for an on-farm composting facility that (1) uses 40,000 square feet of area or less for active food scrap composting; (2) composts only one or more of a specified list of feedstocks; (3) records the amount and source of feedstock composted, records the date and time the feedstock arrives on the farm, and retains the records for three years; and (4) meets any other conditions specified in regulations. The bill establishes several related definitions. Current regulations limit a farmer to up to 5,000 square feet for on-farm composting. This bill looks to increase that to 40,000 square feet and also allow the incorporation of food scraps to the feedstock used in the compost pile. To meet the new demand for removing food scraps from the landfill, farmers will need to do their part to assist. However, being limited to 5,000 sf before requiring extensive permitting requirements, prevents most farmers from being able to participate.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy: We support the right for Maryland farmers to make and process mulch and compost from both on and off the farm sources.

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HB378: Natural Resources - Black Bear Conflict Reduction and Damage Reimbursement Fund - Uses

Delegate Love, E&T at 1:00 PM

This bill alters the Black Bear Damage Reimbursement Fund to authorize grants from the Fund to be made for projects that reduce conflicts between black bears and humans. It renames the Black Bear Damage Reimbursement Fund to be the Black Bear Conflict Reduction and Damage Reimbursement Fund. The bill increases the minimum and maximum amounts of reimbursement from the fund per person annually authorized for damage caused by black bears from \$200 to \$500 and \$3,000 to \$5,000. It also requires a minimum of \$50,000 be available annually for the reimbursement of black bear damage. Lastly, it requires the Governor to include at least \$1,000,000 in the annual budget bill for the Fund.

Currently, there is very little funding in the program and the funding sources are through private donations and the sales of a bear portrait by DNR. This bill would put funding into a much needed program for farmers and landowners that have damage from black bears.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy: We urge DNR to explore, develop and implement effective, innovative practices to control the black bear population in our state. We request DNR to reimburse farmers for crop damage caused by wildlife. MDFB will be requesting two amendments to the bill. We ask for the amount of the of the reimbursement fund be increased to \$75,000 annually and the minimum amount of the reimbursement requirement be eliminated so smaller damages aren't excluded from being reimbursed.

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HB389: Department of Agriculture - State Ombudsman for Value-Added Agriculture

Delegate T Morgan, E&T at 1:00 PM


This bill establishes a State Ombudsman for Value-Added Agriculture as a position in the Department of Agriculture. Value-added agriculture means (1) the alteration of a raw agricultural product in a way that increases the product's worth to a consumer and brings more revenue to a farmer, producer, or processor; and (2) includes all enterprises in which an agricultural business or the agricultural business's products are altered, marketed, produced, or processed in a way that adds income to a farmer, producer, or processor. The state ombudsman for value-added agriculture shall: (1) serve as the primary point of contact for individuals engaging in, or interested in engaging in, value-added agriculture in the state; (2) provide information regarding state and federal regulations relating to value-added agriculture; (3) act as a liaison between state and federal partners involved in value-added agriculture; and (4) perform any other duty or function that supports value-added agriculture in the state, as required by the secretary.

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Committees & Room Numbers:

Senate: Budget & Taxation (B&T), 3 West Miller; Education, Energy and the Environment (EEE), 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



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