



Welcome back to **The Hotline**! Every Friday during session, we'll keep you informed about crucial hearings and bills affecting Maryland's agriculture. Stay tuned to find out how you can help us ***strengthen and grow agriculture in Maryland!***

WHAT WE'RE WORKING ON

Testifying in Annapolis: We were back in Annapolis on Wednesday to testify in respectful **opposition to HB0357**, the House version of the **cage free egg mandate**. Lively discussions were had by both sides – [watch here](#).

Grassroots update: Thanks to so many of you, over **360 contacts were made to legislators** in opposition to the cage-free egg mandate through our [Action Center](#). We've even heard from legislators who have gotten your messages – that means you are making a real impact. **Thank you!**

Let's get local: Did you know that we also weigh-in on local policy that affects farmers by working with our county farm bureaus? Recently, Maryland Farm Bureau wrote a letter to the **Carroll County Commissioners** about the design of a local roundabout that prevents passage of farm vehicles – and [the county responded](#).

Learn more: Want to keep up with our other endeavors? Sign up for our weekly [Communications Newsletter](#) (here's our [latest edition](#)) and follow us on [social media](#)!

WHAT WE'RE MONITORING

SB0392/HB0616: Agricultural Land - Adversarial Foreign Governments - Restrictions on Property Interests

Senator Gallion and Delegates Munoz and Miller | House Hearing: 2/21/24 at 1:00 p.m.

Prohibiting adversarial foreign governments from purchasing, acquiring, leasing, or holding any property interest in agricultural land in the State; and requiring the Attorney General to enforce the Act in a certain manner.

Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: **Support with Amendments**

Maryland Farm Bureau supports SB0392 and HB0616. We

encourage the utilization of productive farmland to be used by our Maryland Farm families. This bill would prohibit adversarial foreign governments from taking up our already limited supply of land in the state.

MDFB Policy: *"Foreign investment in Maryland assets is a concern. The impact of foreign investment in agriculture, banking, insurance, and other business institutions in the United States should be monitored. Foreign government ownership of utility companies and natural resource businesses, including agricultural land, should be limited to less than a controlling interest. We oppose preferential treatment of foreign investments in agriculture and insist that foreign investors be required to conform to the same tax laws, import and export regulations as American products"*

**[HB1042/SB0932](#): Maryland Agricultural BMP Best in Show Program
- Established**

Delegate Guzzone and Senator Elfreth | House Hearing: 2/23/24 at 1:00 p.m | Senate Hearing: 3/08/24 at 9:00 a.m.

Establishing the Maryland Agricultural BMP Best in Show Program to provide and prioritize the use of certain funding relating to agricultural best management practices and to increase the cost-effectiveness and environmental, social, and health impacts of State-funded best management practices in a certain manner; requiring the Department of Agriculture to administer and manage certain competitive grants under the Program in a certain manner; etc.

Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Monitor

This bill would establish the Maryland Agriculture Best Management Practice Best in Show program. This program would provide and prioritize the use of certain funding to agricultural best management practices. Of this bill, 200 million will be transferred from the Bay restoration fund and up to three million will be transferred from the Chesapeake Atlantic Coastal Bays trust fund. This program would be housed in the Maryland Department of Agriculture. Currently, the Maryland Farm Bureau has not taken a position on HB1042 and SB0932 and will continue to track the bill.

[SB1087](#): Maryland Artificial Intelligence Advisory and Oversight Commission

Senator McCray | Senate Hearing: 2/22/24 at 1:00 p.m.

Establishing the Maryland Artificial Intelligence Advisory and Oversight Commission to guide the State in growing, developing, using, and diversifying artificial intelligence in the State; and requiring the Commission to report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly on or before December 1, 2024, and each year thereafter.

Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Monitor

Maryland Farm Bureau looks to monitor SB1087. Maryland Farm Bureau does not have a policy regarding Artificial Intelligence. The American Farm Bureau has developed a policy with Artificial Intelligence in concerns with its regulation but acknowledges the potential it could have to increase the efficiency of agricultural

production.

American Farm Bureau Policy: *"The use of artificial intelligence in agriculture has the potential to offer enhanced efficiency through precision agriculture, optimizing resource use and improving agricultural production. At the same time, the needs of farmers and ranchers must be considered as the regulatory structure for this new technology is developed."*

HB0024/SB0096: Environment - Impact of Environmental Permits and State Agency Actions

Delegate Boyce and Senator Jackson | House Hearing: 2/21/24 at 1:00 p.m. | Senate Hearing: 3/05/24 at 1:00 p.m.

Requiring the Department of the Environment to conduct a climate and environmental equity evaluation regarding the impact of issuing an approval for certain environmental permits; requiring the Department to provide opportunities for residents of the State to opt in to text, phone, e-mail, or regular mail notifications regarding any facility with a pending or final permit approval in or adjacent to the resident's census tract; altering certain reporting requirements for certain State agencies; etc.

Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Support with Amendment

Maryland Farm Bureau supports HB0024 and SB0096 with amendments. Maryland Farm Bureau will advocate for an amendment that protects the CAFOs in our state from being included in this bill.

SB0956/HB1153: Environment - Water Pollution Control - Protecting State Waters From PFAS Pollution (Protecting State Waters From PFAS Pollution Act)

Senator Hester and Delegates Love and Ivey | House Hearing: 3/01/24 at 1:00 p.m. | Senate Hearing: 2/20/24 at 1:00 p.m.

Establishing the discharge limit for PFAS chemicals in any water, including stormwater, discharged from a significant industrial user to be 4 parts per trillion; requiring a significant industrial user to reduce PFAS chemicals from the water it discharges to a publicly owned treatment works in a certain manner; requiring a significant industrial user to store, reuse, and dispose of certain PFAS chemicals in a certain manner; etc.

Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Monitor

Maryland Farm Bureau supports SB0956 and HB1153 with amendments to exempt agriculture. PFAS is a concern for all, especially Maryland farmers as they have been passive receivers over the years. Our goal is to make sure that agriculture is not included in the definition of industrial user.

MDFB Policy: *"Farmers and Ranchers should be protected from harmful actions, exempted from liability, and be eligible to receive financial relief if Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), chemical contaminants or other harmful substances are found on a farm or ranch caused by application as a passive receiver without disclosure or other factors outside their control. We recommend further testing for other possible PFAS and chemical*

WHAT THEY'RE WORKING ON

Education funding discussions: Legislators and teachers gathered this week in Annapolis to advocate for funding the **Blueprint for Maryland's Future** which will need [\\$3.8 billion in additional funding](#) over ten years.

The opposition says: Senator Steve Hershey and former Secretary of Commerce Mike Gill [wrote an op-ed](#) in **Baltimore Sun** arguing that the Blueprint's large price tag will result in higher taxes on Marylanders.

State of the State fun: Governor Wes Moore mentioned [Eastern Shore farmers](#) in his **State of the State address** last week. It seems he was impressed with our tractors :)

WHAT WE'RE MESSAGING ON

This week, the **United States Department of Agriculture** released their latest **Census of Agriculture**, in which Maryland lost over 12,000 acres of farmland but added 121 farms, let's discuss:

Maryland follows the alarming nationwide trend of diminishing farmland

This problem is not unique to Maryland, **nationally** there was **141,733 fewer farms** and a **loss of more than 20,000,000**

acres of farmland

Maryland farmers face **tight margins and volatile markets** on a yearly basis, making it difficult to keep land in agriculture

This is exactly why organizations like ours are needed in delivering on our mission to **strengthen and grow Maryland agriculture** We have long been [sounding the alarm](#) on

disadvantageous policies that contribute to the loss of farmland

[Top of mind](#), **solar siting** on class 1 and 2 agricultural soils and **excessive taxation** on ag products & property.

Maryland bucks the nationwide loss of farms trend by adding **121 farms** over the past five years

This is a testament to the strength of **small and first-generation farmers** in Maryland

MDFB partners with [Horizon Farm Credit](#) and [MARBIDCO](#), which provide **access to capital** for first generation farmers

We also helped pass [HB152](#) last year, which provided grants for **Urban Agriculture** endeavors

Some sectors have seen growth in Maryland, like adding **504 acres of orchards**

This could be contributed to the growth of **pick-your-own** and other **value-added** operations

MDFB helped pass [HB389/SB34](#) last year to add a **Value-Added specialist** at **MDA** to assist farm operations to build value-added products

Thank you for reading **The Hotline!** For questions about policy, contact MDFB's Director of Government Relations, Tyler Hough, at tylough@marylandfb.org. For questions relating to this publication, contact our Director of Communications, Jeb Burchick, at jburchick@marylandfb.org.

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MARYLAND FARM BUREAU®, INC. is a 501(c)(5) federation that serves as the united voice of Maryland farm families. Our organizational strength comes from the active participation of over 9,500 individual and family members who belong to the state's 23 local county Farm Bureau organizations. Since 1915, Maryland Farm Bureau has been committed to protecting and growing agriculture and preserving rural life. Maryland Farm Bureau is a proud member of the American Farm Bureau® Federation. For more information, visit www.mdfarmbureau.com