



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

**Priority bill moves:** We're proud to say that after Maryland Farm Bureau [testified in favor](#) of **SB0367: Natural Resources - Antlerless Deer Hunting Programs - Authorization**, the bill has been voted [through the committee!](#)



### **Action**



**Alert :** As we know all too well, even if a bill moves, there's never a guarantee it will move further – that's why we need your help. ***Easily write your legislators*** in support of **SB0367/HB048** on our [Action Center](#).

**A reminder:** This bill allows counties that have successfully hosted **deer management programs** in the past (like the lower shore's **Deer Harvest Challenge**) to continue their impactful efforts. This benefits our farmers who face crop damage from an overpopulation of deer.

**Don't forget:** Past editions of **The Hotline** are available on [our website!](#)

## WHAT WE'RE MONITORING

**HB1318: Solid Waste Disposal Surcharge and Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Fund and Grant Programs - Established**

*Delegate Boyce | House Hearing: 3/01/24 at 1:00 p.m.*

Establishing the On-Farm Organics Diversion and Recycling Grant Program in the Department of Agriculture to award grants to eligible entities for on-farm organics recycling and compost use, wasted food prevention, and food rescue; establishing a solid waste disposal surcharge of \$2 per ton of solid waste processed by a refuse disposal system for final disposal; establishing the Wasted Food Reduction and Diversion Grant Program in the Department of the Environment; etc.

## **Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Support**

Maryland Farm Bureau supports HB1318 in its efforts to provide grants for On-Farm Organic Diversion and Composting. Managing waste is important to farmers and supporting the implementation of on-farm composting is beneficial to the farmer and surrounding environment.

**MDFB Policy:** *"We support grant programs to provide infrastructure for urban farming/agriculture. We encourage government funding of composting facilities."*

## **HB1165 (SB0969): Stream and Watershed Restoration - Stream Restoration Contractor Licensing and Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Restoration and Funding (Whole Watershed Act)**

*Delegate Love | House Hearing: 3/01/24 at 1:00 p.m.*

Establishing the Stream Restoration Contractors Licensing Board; requiring a person to be licensed as a stream restoration contractor or be employed by an individual or entity that is licensed as a stream restoration contractor before the person performs or solicits to perform stream restoration contractor services in the State, subject to a certain exception; requiring the Department of the Environment to provide notice of a certain violation to a stream restoration contractor; etc.

## **Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Oppose**

Maryland Farm Bureau opposes HB1165 and SB0968. This bill establishes some initiatives for stream and watershed restoration in the state but requires MALPF funding. We do not support the idea of redirecting funding to something that isn't preserving farmland.

**MDFB Policy:** *"We oppose transfer and/or use of funds set aside for agricultural land preservation for anything other than the preservation of farmland."*

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

*Delegates Love and Ivey | House Hearing: 3/01/24 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 contamination sources in groundwater."*

**[HB1129 \(SB0902\): Wildlife - Protections and Highway Crossings](#)**

*Delegates Ruth | House Hearing: 2/28/24 at 1:00 p.m.*

Requiring the Department of Natural Resources, in collaboration with the State Highway Administration, to identify and prioritize certain species whose habitat or movement corridors intersect with State highways and develop tools, technology, and techniques to identify certain State highway infrastructure locations; requiring the Department of Natural Resources to take certain actions regarding a statewide deer population survey on or before November 1, 2024, and June 30, 2026; etc.

**Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Monitor**

Maryland Farm Bureau looks to monitor HB1129 and SB0902. We want to ensure the solutions intended in this bill do not negatively impact agriculture and take farmers into account with this legislation.

**MDFB Policy:** *"We urge the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to explore, develop and implement effective, innovative practices to control the deer population in our state."*

**[HB1101 \(SB0653\): Standing - Environmental and Natural Resources Protection Proceedings \(Clean Water Justice Act of 2024\)](#)**

*Delegate Love | House Hearing: 3/01/24 at 1:00 p.m.*

Providing certain persons and associations standing in environmental and natural resources protection proceedings, including proceedings arising under provisions of law relating to water quality and water resources protection, subject to certain conditions; authorizing persons that meet standing requirements to bring certain civil actions under certain circumstances; authorizing a court to grant certain relief, award certain costs, and impose certain civil penalties in certain civil actions under certain circumstances; etc.

**Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Oppose**

Maryland Farm Bureau opposes HB1101 and SB0653. This bill would pose farmers at risk of lawsuits. We continue to advocate for farmer's protection under the law. No farmer in compliance should be at risk of a lawsuit.

**MDFB Policy:** *"We urge changes to "standing law" so that no farmer who is in compliance with applicable law could be sued by a third party."*

**[HB1025 \(SB0841\): Transportation - Motor Fuel Tax Rates, Vehicle-Miles-Traveled Tax, and](#)**

## **Farebox Recovery Requirement (Transportation Equity, Fairness, and Privacy Act of 2024)**

*Delegates M. Morgan, Mangione, Adams, Arentz, Baker, Buckel, Chisholm, Ciliberti, Fisher, Ghrist, Griffith, Hartman, Hinebaugh, Hornberger, Hutchinson, Jacobs, Kipke, R. Long, McComas, Metzgar, Miller, T. Morgan, Munoz, Nawrocki, Otto, Pippy, Reilly, Rose, Schmidt, Stonko, Szeliga, and*

*Valentine | House Hearing: 2/27/24 at 1:00 p.m. | Senate Hearing: 2/28/24 at 1:00 p.m.*

Repealing a requirement that certain motor fuel tax rates be adjusted in future years based on growth in the Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers; prohibiting the State or a local jurisdiction from imposing or levying a vehicle-miles-traveled tax or certain other similar fees, tolls, or taxes; requiring that the Maryland Transit Administration achieve a certain farebox recovery requirement for certain transit services; etc.

### **Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Support**

Maryland Farm Bureau supports HB1025 and SB0841. We support prohibiting state or local jurisdictions from adding on extra fees related to our farmer's vehicles. This bill supports agricultural viability by preventing unwanted costs on our farm families.

## **HB1008: Fossil Fuel Transportation Fee and Mitigation Fund (Climate Pollution Reduction Fund Act)**

*Delegate Stein | House Hearing: 3/01/24 at 1:00 p.m.*

Imposing a fossil fuel transportation fee on a person that transports a fossil fuel in the State; providing that the rate of the fossil fuel transportation fee is 30 cents per million British thermal units of fossil fuels transported in the State; providing the fee does not apply to the transportation of a fossil fuel that is solely for use on a farm and the carrier does not otherwise use or sell the fossil fuel; establishing the Fossil Fuel Mitigation Fund to support activities that reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the State; etc.

### **Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Oppose**

Maryland Farm Bureau opposes HB1008. This bill is another attempt at adding additional costs to our farmers. Although it phrases a farm exception, we are opposed to an increase in the state fuel tax.

**MDFB Policy:** *"We are opposed to an increase in the State Fuel Tax."*

## **HB0991 (SB1074): Environment - Industrial Sludge Utilization Permit - Establishment** *Delegate Love | House Hearing: 2/28/24 at 1:00 p.m.*

Establishing an industrial sludge utilization permit; prohibiting a person from utilizing industrial sludge in the State unless the person obtains a permit; requiring the Department of the Environment to provide certain notices and information to certain persons; applying certain provisions of law regarding public notice and participation to industrial sludge utilization permits; and authorizing a representative of the Department to enter and inspect any site where industrial sludge is utilized.

## **Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Monitor**

Maryland Farm Bureau looks to monitor HB0991 and SB1074 for possible amendments to its language. We look to limit the restrictions posed on farmers concerning the use of biosolids on farmland. For now, we will monitor the state of this bill and partake in the amendment development process.

**MDFB Policy:** *"We oppose any legislation that would allow biosolids utilized on farmland to be less restrictive than the standards outlined in MDA's 2012 Nutrient Management Guidelines. Local agencies should be precluded from enacting regulations governing use of biosolids that are more restrictive than State standards."*

## **HB0979 (SB0915): Agriculture - Invasive Plant Species - Regulation (Biodiversity and Agriculture Protection Act)**

*Delegate Foley | House Hearing: 2/28/24 at 1:00 p.m. | Senate Hearing: 3/05/24 at 1:00 p.m.*

Altering the regulatory approach for controlling invasive plant species in the State, including repealing certain provisions of law relating to a two-tiered regulatory approach and requiring the Secretary of Agriculture to establish a list of prohibited invasive plants by regulation in a certain manner on or before October 1, 2024; establishing certain protocols for assessing certain nonnative plants and determining whether those plants are invasive or whether the plants may be placed on a certain watch list; etc.

## **Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Monitor**

Maryland Farm Bureau looks to monitor HB0979 and SB0915. We are looking to make sure this bill has sufficient wording that matches our policy and ensures the best management of invasive plant species.

**MDFB Policy:** *"We urge the state to eliminate from the list those species (threatened or endangered) that might have limited numbers in Maryland but are common elsewhere. Endangered species protection should not go beyond those species protected by federal law. Any plant or animal that is taken because of an agricultural practice shall be considered an incidental taking. We strongly urge the Maryland Department of Agriculture to have phragmites, Rosa multiflora (multi flora rose) (except when used as rootstock by the nursery industry), Microstegium vimineum (Japanese stilt grass), Amaranthus palmeri (Palmer Amaranth), Asiatic tearthumb (mile-a-minute vine or kudzu), Celastrus orbiculatus (Asiatic bittersweet vine) and Ailanthus (Tree of Heaven) placed on the noxious weed list. We urge the SHA to submit a realistic fiscal impact statement related to adding palmer amaranth to the noxious weed list."*

## **HB0929 (SB0854): Agriculture – Nuisance Insects**

*Washington County Delegation | House - Hearing 2/28 at 1:00 p.m. | Senate - Hearing 3/08 at 1:00 p.m.*

Requiring, instead of authorizing, the Secretary of Agriculture to implement, under certain circumstances, a program to use Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis to control or eliminate nuisance insects in the State; and requiring, instead of authorizing, the Secretary to carry out

a certain project to control or eliminate nuisance insects if the county or municipality in which the nuisance insects are located agrees to pay 50% of the costs associated with the project.

### **Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Monitor**

Maryland Farm Bureau will monitor HB0929 and SB0854. Although this bill is titled under Agriculture, nuisance insects are defined as insects that are determined by the secretary to pest or annoy only humans. Nuisance insects do not include an insect that is a threat to the health of humans, animals, or plants. We look to ensure bill language does not impact agriculture.

### **[SB0056 \(HB0163\): Food Waste and Solid Waste Reduction – Grants, Fund, and Surcharge](#) *Delegates Charkoudian | House Hearing: 3/01/24 at 1:00 p.m.***

Establishing the On-Farm Organic Diversion and Composting Grant Program to award grants to eligible entities to assist with the costs of developing and implementing on-farm composting and compost use, food waste prevention, and food rescue projects; requiring the Department of the Environment to use funds from the Reduce, Recycle, Remanufacture Fund to support the Grant Program to Reduce and Compost School Waste; authorizing the Department to establish a statewide solid waste disposal surcharge; etc.

### **Maryland Farm Bureau's Position: Support**

Maryland Farm Bureau supports SB0056 in its efforts to provide funding for On-Farm Organic Diversion and Composting. Managing waste is important to farmers and supporting the implementation of on-farm composting is beneficial to the farmer and surrounding environment.

**MDFB Policy:** *"We support grant programs to provide infrastructure for urban farming/agriculture. We encourage government funding of composting facilities."*

## WHAT THEY'RE WORKING ON

**State's climate plan:** The **Baltimore Sun** [reports that](#), "Maryland's funding for climate goals will focus on electrifying buildings, school buses," as part of **\$90 million in new spending** to reach that goals.

**How the plan will affect ag:** Read the [state's climate plan](#) for **agriculture**, starting on page 58: "Agricultural sector GHG emissions can be reduced through mitigation methods involving manure management practices and precision animal feeding."

**In the House:** Speaker **Adrienne Jones** released a series of bills as part of her "Decency Agenda," [Watch the Speaker's message](#) about the package.

## WHAT WE'RE MESSAGING ON

Much has been discussed about the state's **climate goals**, let's take a closer look at **agriculture's role** in meeting the goals:



***Agriculture only accounts for an incredibly small portion*** of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Maryland at 4%.

In comparison, the **transportation sector accounted for 35%, industrial processes at 18%, building fuel use at 16%, and the waste industry at 10%**

While these high-emission industries certainly make our lives more comfortable, we could survive without them. **We can't survive without agriculture.**

***Our ag emission track significantly lower*** than agriculture on the national level. **Nationally, agriculture accounts for 10% of [GHG emissions](#), compared to 4% in Maryland.**

Despite our low carbon footprint, **agriculture still remains commercially viable** in Maryland, as we are the **state's largest commercial industry**

***This great progress is due to Maryland farmers*** and their **thriving stewardship** of the land

As we've covered in the past, **Maryland farmers were early adopters of cover crops**, which can help [mitigate the effects of climate change](#)

It should be noted that **farmers nationally are making progress**, too – [ag's GHG emissions](#) fell more than 4% from 2019 to 2020

**American Farm Bureau President Zippy Duvall:** *"Farmers are dedicated to doing even better through voluntary, market-based incentives that allow them to capture more greenhouse gases while meeting growing food demands here at home and abroad."*

***We believe there is a mutually beneficial way to meet our climate goals*** while keeping **agriculture commercially viable** by protecting our food supply and farmland.

Thank you for reading **The Hotline!** For questions about policy, contact MDFB's Director of Government Relations, Tyler Hough, at [tyough@marylandfb.org](mailto:tyough@marylandfb.org). For questions relating to this publication, contact our Director of Communications, Jeb Burchick, at [jburchick@marylandfb.org](mailto: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](http://www.mdfarmbureau.com)

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