



www.mdfarmbureau.com | Contact: Colby Ferguson



#1: January 22, 2021

Welcome to the first Hotline of the 2021 Maryland General Assembly session. The Hotline will be sent to you each week during the session to make you aware of upcoming hearings for bills that will impact Maryland's farm community. We will ask Farm Bureau members to "take action" on proposed legislation to ensure the preservation and protection of Maryland agriculture. The Hotline is distributed to more than 6,000 farmers across the state and to all 188 members of the Maryland General Assembly.

Colby Ferguson will staff Maryland Farm Bureau's Annapolis office. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic limitations, the legislative session will be done in a virtual platform. All bill hearings and testimony will be done online. Because of this virtual format, submitting written testimony as well as signing up to testify orally must be done 2 days in advance of the bill hearing. (meaning, you must sign up on Monday for a Wednesday bill hearing) The best way to reach Colby is via text, email, or leave a voicemail message. He will get back to you as soon as possible. You can reach Colby on his cell phone at (240) 578-0396 or by email at cferguson@marylandfb.org.

The Hotline descriptions will include the title of the bill, our summary and MDFB's position. Our positions are based on policy adopted by grassroots members at our annual convention. You can view the text of the bill and the MGA fiscal analysis by clicking on the hyperlink associated with the bill number and selecting the "documents" tab. Please keep in mind that the positions taken in each Hotline by the Maryland Farm Bureau are based on the information available on the bill at the time of publication. Our position may change if the bill is amended after publication.

The Hotline will be posted on the [MFB website](#) each week. Again, this year we will use the MDFB action center. [Here](#) you can keep up to date on important bills, find your legislator and send messages. The Maryland General Assembly's [website](#) can also serve as a valuable tool for legislative information. The site offers the proceedings and agendas of the House and Senate, hearing schedules, bill information and status, and other data updated nightly.

Lastly, if you want to learn how to sign up for bill hearings to either submit written testimony or to testify orally, [watch this video tutorial found in this link](#). After watching this video, if you have issues, then reach out to Colby for additional assistance.

We will not be able to sign you up this year because of the new system.

The bills scheduled for hearing next week include:

Tuesday, January 26, 2021

SB11 - Sales and Use Tax - Agricultural Purpose Exemption - Seedlings and Fruit Trees
Senator Ellis, B&T at 1:00 PM in 3 West Miller

The bill expands an exemption from the sales and use tax for the sale of items for an agricultural purpose to include the sale of seedlings and fruit trees. After talking with the winery groups, they would like to have vines be added to the bill. MDFB will include this amendment in testimony.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy: We support the continued exemption of agricultural items and related services from the state sales tax.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS SB11 WITH AMENDMENT

SB24 - Sports and Event Wagering License – Maryland State Fair and Agricultural Society, Inc.
Senator West, B&T at 1:00 PM in 3 West Miller

This bill requires the State Lottery and Gaming Control Commission to issue a sports and event wagering license to the Maryland State Fair and Agricultural Society, Inc. if they issue a license to any another entity in the state.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy: Any expansion into other forms of gambling such as table games and sports book similar to Video Lottery Terminals (VLTs) should benefit the equine industry and agricultural education programs.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS SB24

SB151 - Constitutional Amendment - Environmental Rights
Senator Patterson, JPR at 1:00 PM in 2 East Miller

This proposed constitutional amendment establishes that every person has the right to a clean and healthy environment, including the right to clean air; pure water; ecosystems that sustain the State's natural resources, including the waters of the State, air, flora, fauna, climate, and public lands; and the preservation of the natural, healthful, scenic, and historic values of the environment. The bill authorizes the State, a political subdivision of the State, and any person to enforce these rights against any public party through appropriate legal proceedings. Every person also has the right to intervene in an action brought by the State or a political subdivision of the State to protect the rights established by the bill. The bill also (1) establishes that the State's natural resources are the common property of every person and (2) establishes standards of treatment for the State's natural resources.

This would give citizens in Maryland standing to intervene on any state application process if they believe it interferes with any of those clean environment definitions

mentioned above. Some examples would include, CAFO's, irrigation, hemp, new buildings, composting, commercial fishing and aquaculture permits.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy: We strongly support responsible and workable actions designed to permit and protect the privilege and rights of farmers, commercial fisherman, and aquaculturalists, to produce without undue or unreasonable restrictions, regulations, or legislation. We support actions to ensure that farmers are protected from liability and nuisance suits when carrying out normal production practices.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU OPPOSES SB151

Wednesday, January 27, 2021

HB84 - Consumer Protection - Right to Repair

Delegate Feldmark, ECM at 1:30 PM in 230 HOB

This bill requires an original equipment manufacturer, on fair and reasonable terms, to make available to an independent repair provider or owner of digital electronic equipment any documentation, parts, tools, or updates to information or embedded software. It also requires, as it applies to equipment that contains a security-related function, any documentation, tools, parts, or updates needed to reset the lock or function when disabled.

Since this bill includes more than just farm equipment, we will be offering an amendment to exempt farm equipment from the bill since the equipment dealers have rolled out a right to repair program for farmers and independent repair shops.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS HB84 WITH AMENDMENT

Thursday, January 28, 2021

HB92 - Procurement - Invasive and Nonnative Plant Species - Prohibition on Use of State Funds

Delegate Luedtke, HGO at 1:30 PM in 240 HOB

This bill prohibits state agencies from purchasing nonnative and invasive plants for public projects. The bill does allow a waiver if there are no other options. This bill would not all state agencies from purchasing sod even though it is grown in Maryland, because the seed originated from outside the state.

MDFB will be offering an amendment to exempt sod that is grown in the state from this bill.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS HB92 WITH AMENDMENT

HB474 - Income Tax Credit - Wineries and Vineyards - Sunset Extension

Delegate Guyton, W&M at 1:30 PM in 130 HOB

This bill extends the state income tax credit on expenses related to wineries and vineyards in Maryland to June 30, 2026. Current law has the tax credit sunseting June 30, 2021. This tax credit has been very helpful to build the winery industry in Maryland, but it

is still small in size and needs to continue to grow to make sure the industry survives and the services that supply this industry survive.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS HB474

SB119 - Clean Water Commerce Act of 2021
Senator Guzzone, EHEA at 11:00 AM in 2 West Miller

This bill addresses the sunset of the pilot program and establishes the Clean Water Commerce Fund as a special, nonlapsing fund. It requires the Department of the Environment to transfer \$20,000,000 from the Bay Restoration Fund to the Clean Water Commerce Fund beginning in fiscal year 2022. The bill alters the authorized uses of the Bay Restoration Fund and repeals the authorization to use funds in the Bay Restoration Fund for costs associated with nutrient or sediment load reductions.

MDFB was involved in the workgroup to review and amend this bill over the last two months. We will be supporting the sponsor amendments being offered.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS SB119 WITH AMENDMENT

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, log on to the Maryland General Assembly [website](#) and select the "Legislators" Tab at the top.

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

USDA Offers Additional Assistance Through Coronavirus Food Assistance Program

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue announced the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will provide additional assistance through the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP), expanding eligibility for some agricultural producers and commodities as well as updating payments to accurately compensate some producers who already applied for the program. [Read more here.](#)

Secretary Perdue Statement on H-2A Modernization

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue today issued a statement applauding the Department of Labor's final rule modernizing the H-2A visa program:

"This final rule streamlining and modernizing the H-2A visa process will go a long way in ensuring American farmers have access to a stable and skilled workforce, all while removing unnecessary bureaucratic processes. USDA's goal is to help farmers navigate the complex H-2A program that is administered by Department of Labor, Department of Homeland Security, and the State Department so hiring a farm worker is an easier process," said Secretary Perdue. "These modernizations make the Federal government more responsive to our customers, ensuring American agriculture continues to lead the world for years to come." [Read more here.](#)

Updates on Maryland's COVID-19 Vaccine Plan

Effective Monday, January 18, Maryland will move to Phase 1B and all priority groups identified below. Effective Monday, January 25, Maryland will move to Phase 1C and all priority groups identified in the link. All individuals in Phases 1A and 1B remain eligible for COVID-19 vaccine. The Maryland Department of Health (MDH) has created a public web page for vaccination site listings at CovidVAX.Maryland.gov. [Read more here.](#)

Benefits of Using Poultry Litter for Crop Production

Thinking about switching to poultry litter as a crop fertilizer and soil amendment? Poultry litter makes a great low cost fertilizer for corn, hay and organic certified field crops. Get the "scoop" on poultry litter from Dr. Nicole Fiorellino, UM Extension Agronomist along with farmers who use the product. You'll also get an update on Maryland's FastTrack grants to haul poultry litter. [Register here.](#)

Paycheck Protection Program

The Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) has provided relief for small to medium-sized businesses all across the nation and as the impacts of the pandemic continue to take effect, the additional funds for the PPP and simplified forgiveness process are welcomed. The loan program was developed to provide relief and stimulus to eligible businesses including Farmers and Ranchers, nonprofit organizations, and independent contractors.

Farm Bureau Bank is proud to have assisted the businesses and organizations in our Farm Bureau family throughout the first two rounds of the PPP and has been working diligently to prepare for the next. If you are interested in applying for a PPP loan, [click here](#) to register and access our Application Portal.

To learn more about eligibility and the recent enhancements to the PPP and forgiveness process, we encourage members to visit farmbureau.bank.

Farm Bureau Health Care

Our new member benefit is healthcare coverage through [Farm Bureau HealthCare!](#) Learn about your options and choose the plan that fits your life, your family, and your team all while saving an average of 8-12% at FarmBureauHealthCare.com.