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#5: February 19, 2021

Welcome to this week's hotline. The beginning of this week started with a priority bill briefing to our members for our virtual Day in Annapolis. The recording of the briefing can be found on our website under the [Issues](#) tab. We testified on several bills this week from net metering to land preservation to minimum wage. As we move into the last week of February, committees will continue to schedule lengthy bill hearings to move the rest of the bills through the process. Next Wednesday will be our most active hearing day of the year so far. Make sure to follow our key legislation and action alerts on our [Action Center](#).

The following bills will be heard next week:

Tuesday, February 23, 2021

[SB 51](#): Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland - Property Management - Southern Maryland Regional Agricultural Center
Senator Bailey, FIN at 1:00 PM in 3 East Miller

This bill authorizes the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland to act as a property manager of the Southern Maryland Regional Agricultural Center (RAC) that is being built in cooperation with St. Mary's County for the benefit of all Southern Maryland agricultural producers.

This bill is a technical correction to current law to allow the Tri-County Council and SMADC to partner with St. Mary's County on this valuable project and allow SMADC to manage the property.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS SB 51

SB 549: Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard - Thermal Biomass Systems
Senator Hershey, FIN at 1:00 PM in 3 East Miller

This bill authorizes thermal biomass systems, for purposes of the State's Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard (RPS), to use food waste, qualifying biomass, or animal manure as a source of fuel, regardless of the relative mix of those fuel sources. Other eligibility requirements related to thermal biomass systems and their fuel components are unchanged. Maryland Farm Bureau supports the clarifying amendments being offered by the Maryland Forests Association to include Silvicultural products and natural wood waste.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy: We support energy generation from all agricultural residues and byproducts to be considered value-added production on a farm. We support initiatives to generate heat & electricity from timber resources.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS SB 549 WITH AMENDMENT

Wednesday, February 24, 2021

HB 991: Natural Resources – Forest Mitigation Banks – Qualified Preservation
Delegate Gilchrist, E&T at 1:30 PM in 250 HOB

This bill establishes the use of qualified preservation in a forest mitigation bank of all or a part of existing forests as a standard for meeting afforestation or reforestation requirements under the Forest Conservation Act. The bill defines the term "qualified preservation" as it applies to the Forest Conservation Act and alters the defined term "forest mitigation banking" as it applies to the Forest Conservation Act to include the qualified preservation of forests.

In 2020, there was an Attorney General opinion that existing stands of forests were not eligible for Forest Banking credits. The many landowners and farmers that have spent money to put their existing forested property in forest banking programs around the state. This is a significant economic impact to not allowing those properties to now not be eligible. This bill will clarify in the State Natural Resources Article that existing stands of forest are eligible for Forest Banking Credits.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS HB 991

HB 1025: Pesticides – Carbofuran – Collection, Disposal, and Prohibition on Possession or Storage
Delegate Terrasa, E&T at 1:30 PM in 250 HOB

This bill requires the Department of Agriculture, in coordination with the Department of Natural Resources, to establish a program to address the illegal use of carbofuran and to

eliminate stockpiles of carbofuran in the State by prohibiting a person from possessing or storing any quantity of carbofuran in the State on or after January 1, 2024. Lastly, this bill authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Natural Resources, or a Natural Resources police officer to seize any quantity of carbofuran for enforcement purposes.

Carbofuran was voluntarily canceled at the federal level in 2009. However, since there was no buyback program, there still seems to be some of this product on farms. MDFB has no issue with this program being created, but it should remain within the Maryland Department of Agriculture's authority. The Department of Natural Resources does not work in pesticide regulation and the Natural Resources Police are not trained to understand what to look for.

If the bill were amended to remove DNR, MDFB would remove their opposition to the bill.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy: In order to help protect the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, we urge the state to maintain a biannual collection point in each region of Maryland for the disposal of old chemicals, chemical containers, paint, batteries and all other hazardous waste materials.

We urge the Department of Agriculture to continue the recovery program for banned chemicals.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU OPPOSES HB 1025

[SB 621](#): Association Health Coverage Plans
Senator Edwards, FIN at 1:00 PM in 3 East Miller

This bill specifies that, for purposes of group health insurance, an "association" may include a chamber of commerce. The bill repeals application of Maryland's small group market reforms to any health benefit plan offered by an association, a professional employer organization, or any other entity, including a plan issued under the laws of another state. The definitions of "health benefit plan" are altered to exclude certain association plans from premium rate review and to exclude a multiple employer trust or association from the requirements of the small group market.

As Maryland Farm Bureau looks into ways to provide more services to Maryland farmers and rural businesses, affordable health care coverage is an area that has shown to be a major area of concern. **We are asking to be added to the Chamber of Commerce as eligible entities to offer association health coverage plans.**

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS SB 621 WITH AMENDMENT

[SB 673](#): Department of Agriculture - Urban Agriculture Grant Program
Senator Gallion, EHEA at 1:00 PM in 2 West Miller

This bill establishes an Urban Agriculture Grant Program within the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) and an Urban Agriculture Grant Fund to support the program. The bill authorizes the distribution of up to \$400,000 from the unclaimed property fund to the Urban Agriculture Grant Fund for each fiscal year from fiscal 2023 through 2026.

Finding new funding sources to stimulate Urban Agriculture in Maryland is critical to getting this sector of the Ag industry off the ground. The upfront input costs to starting an Urban Ag program are very high as, in many cases, infrastructure is needed as well as soil improvements. Many times, the available space is limited and more concentrated production methods are required to make the operation profitable. These land improvements typically make the project not cash flow and prevent the operation from starting. This bill is designed to lessen that economic burden on those that are trying to start an Urban Ag operation in Baltimore City. Creating jobs, providing local & healthy farm products and offering the ability for consumers in Baltimore City to actually see where their food comes from instills pride and accomplishment in those areas and addresses things like food deserts and reduces carbon prints from food.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy: We support and encourage urban farming/agriculture.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS SB 673

SB 692: State Planning – Preservation of Agricultural Land – Goal
Senator Young, EHEA at 1:00 PM in 2 West Miller

This bill simply extends and codifies an unwritten State goal of preserving a total of 1,030,000 acres of productive agricultural land to 2030 through the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation, the Maryland GreenPrint Program, the Rural Legacy Program, the Maryland Environmental Trust, and local land preservation programs. The previous goal was to expire in 2022. This bill doesn't include MARBIDCO's Next Generation Ag Land Acquisition Program. We will be asking for a simple amendment to include the Next Gen program.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy: We urge full funding by the state and counties for agland preservation programs, including but not limited to MALPF, Rural Legacy and Critical Farms Program. Payments for these programs should reflect current market values for farmland. Furthermore, we urge the state and county governments to continue to support the voluntary preservation of agricultural land with substantial increases in funding. We encourage them to work with all interested stakeholders to develop innovative voluntary programs that maximize farmland preservation while protecting landowner equity and private property rights and not negatively impacting any other rights running with the land.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS SB 692 WITH AMENDMENT

SB 716: Solid Waste Management – Prohibition on Releasing a Balloon Into the Atmosphere

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

Legislation that prohibits a person from knowingly and intentionally releasing or causing to be released, or organizing the release of, balloons into the atmosphere. This does not apply to: (1) a balloon that is released for scientific or meteorological purposes; (2) a hot air balloon that is recovered after launch; or (3) the negligent or unintentional release of a balloon. The bill establishes a civil penalty of \$250 for a violation of the Act.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS SB 716

SB 769: Income Tax Credit for Venison Donation - Alterations, Extension, and Testing for Chronic Wasting Disease

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

This bill Increases from \$50 to \$75 the maximum amount of qualified expenses an individual may claim as a credit against the State income tax when they donate processed deer meat to a food bank. It also increases from \$200 to \$600 the maximum aggregate credit amount the individual may claim in a taxable year. This bill extends for 5 years the termination date of the credit. Lastly, the bill requires the Department of Natural Resources to report to the General Assembly on or before December 31, 2021, on testing of deer for chronic wasting disease.

Current law does not put a maximum aggregate credit on deer that are harvested under a deer crop damage permit. This bill does not effect that part of the law.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy: We support a state tax credit for each deer donated to a food bank or other food donation non-profit under a crop damage permit.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS SB 769

SB 803: Economic Development – Western Maryland Economic Future Investment Board and Fund – Establishment

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

This bill establishes the Western Maryland Economic Future Investment Board. The bill establishes the Western Maryland Economic Future Investment Fund as a special, nonlapsing fund to provide grant funding to capital infrastructure projects and business development projects that improve the economic conditions in the region. The amount of the fund would be \$20,000,000. The bill requires the Tri-County Council for Western Maryland to administer the Fund.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy: We support the State of Maryland increasing funding to the Tri-County Councils for the purpose of including and funding agricultural and natural resources development in their mission.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS SB 803

Friday, February 26, 2021

HB 1134: Natural Resources - Fishing and Hunting Rights
Delegate Carey, E&T at 1:30 PM in 250 HOB

This bill simply establishes a Right-to-Fish & Hunt in Maryland as long as the person is following the regulations and restrictions outlined in state law.

Maryland Farm Bureau supports the right to hunt and fish in Maryland. Hopefully this bill will assist with ensuring hunting and fishing remain available throughout the state.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS HB 1134

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



"SILO" Digital Screening

Maryland Farm Bureau and Nationwide are sponsoring a free Digital Community screening of the film "SILO." SILO is the first ever feature film about a grain bin 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 digital screening is on February 24, 2021 from 7-8:30 PM. If you have previously registered for the winter/spring webinar series, you will be automatically registered for this screening. [Register here.](#)

Virtual 2021 Maryland Farmers Market Conference

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the Maryland Department of Health

(MDH) will host the virtual 2021 Maryland Farmers Market Conference on Wednesday, March 3 from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. [More here.](#)

Civil Discourse, Deliberative Engagement, and Leading with Humility

On February 23 and 25, the [LEAD Maryland Foundation](#) and the [Harry R. Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology](#) invite you to join the members of LEAD Class XI in welcoming Dr. Timothy Shaffer, as he leads guests in a keynote presentation and complimentary workshop titled: *Civil Discourse, Deliberative Engagement, and Leading with Humility*. This two-part virtual event, consisting of a keynote presentation on February 23 and a workshop on February 25, will dive into the concepts of civil discourse, its role within democracy, and examples of how everyone can engage in civic discourse work to positively shape their communities and local organizations. Both the keynote presentation and workshop are held from 9:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. on their respective dates, and are FREE to attend. [Register here.](#)

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