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#### #8: March 12, 2021

Welcome to Hotline 8. This week was filled with subcommittee and full committee voting sessions and a few days of lengthy bill hearings. Many of the Sunday hunting Senate bills were finally heard. Maryland Farm Bureau advocated for the Association Health Care plans and asked to be included in them while spending many hours following committee discussions and votes. Due to bill crossover deadline being March 22nd, this will be the last weekly hotline that shows next week's bill hearings as after crossover, the hearings are scheduled much more randomly and many times only a couple of days in advance. Typically, bill hearings in the opposite chamber committees are sponsor only. So MDFB will be submitting written testimony on them. Next week's Hotline will be a priority bill update. This will show where the bills we took a position on stand in this year's legislative session. To contact legislators and follow important bills, visit Maryland Farm Bureau's [action center](#) and select "key legislation".

The following bills will be heard next week:

#### Tuesday, March 16, 2021

**HB 639:** Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland – Property Management – Southern Maryland Regional Agricultural Center  
*Delegate Davis, E&T at 1:30 PM in 250 HOB*

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 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 HB 639

Wednesday, March 17, 2021

**SB 727:** Maryland Healthy Working Families Act – Revisions and Public Health Emergency Leave

*Senator Feldman, FIN at 1:00 PM in 3 East Miller*

This bill repeals the exemptions from the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act for several employee categories, including agriculture workers. The bill requires employers to allow employees to use earned sick and safe leave during a public health emergency and requires employers to provide employees earned sick and safe leave on the date that a public health emergency was declared or proclaimed for a jurisdiction. The bill requires an employer to provide earned sick and safe leave regardless of the employee's length of employment with the employer.

During the paid sick leave bill discussion several years ago, agriculture workers were exempted from this legislation do to the extreme difficulties a farm would have when trying to administer it. Unfortunately, this bill seeks to remove that exemption and add farms back into this discussion.

Maryland Farm Bureau requests the agriculture worker exemption remain in place.

## MARYLAND FARM BUREAU OPPOSES SB 727

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

### **USDA Announces Availability of an Additional \$35 Million for the Value-Added Producer Grant Program to Support COVID-19 Relief Efforts**

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) today announced that it is making an additional \$35 million available this year in the Value-Added Producer Grant Program to support agricultural producers affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. This funding is made possible through the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021. In total, \$76 million is available. [More here.](#)

### **Department Announces Pesticide Disposal Program for 2021**

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) today announced that it will reconstitute its Pesticide Disposal Program. This free program allows farmers across the state to safely and properly dispose of any unwanted or unusable agricultural pesticides. The Pesticide Disposal Program is run in partnership with the Maryland Department of Environment (MDE) and University of Maryland Extension (UME). [More here.](#)

### **March 15 Deadline to Complete Election & Enrollment for 2021 Agriculture Risk Coverage, Price Loss Coverage Programs**

Agricultural producers in Maryland who have not yet elected and enrolled in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for 2021 have until March 15. Producers who have not signed a contract or who want to make an election change should contact their local U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Service Center to make an appointment. [More here.](#)

### **Department Launches 2021 Manure Happens Public Education Campaign**

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) has launched its annual Manure Happens public education campaign to help citizens understand how and why farmers recycle manure as a crop fertilizer and soil conditioner. The 2021 campaign focuses on how farmers protect local streams from runoff when using chicken and livestock manure to fertilize their crops and build healthy soils. The ads will run in local newspapers, websites, and social media throughout March. [More here.](#)

### **Introduction to Growing Industrial Hemp Fiber and Grain Webinar**

University of Maryland, Penn State Extension and West Virginia University Extension have teamed up to provide webinars on the production of hemp for fiber and grain. The webinar will be available on March 15th at 10am, March 22nd at 1pm and on March 29th at 7pm. The one-hour-long webinar will cover the production of hemp from seeding to harvesting. [More here.](#)

### **Member Benefit: Work Boots**

Work Boots.com is an online store specializing in work footwear, apparel and equipment. With styles from industry giants like Carhartt, Dickies, Timberland Pro and Wolverine, Work Boots.com is a one-stop shop for all work wear requirements. Members of the Maryland Farm Bureau receive a 15% off discount to Work Boots.com Call (636) 680-8061 or 410-922-3426 for the promo code. [More here.](#)

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