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House Bill 395 - Maryland Strategic Energy Investment Fund - Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative - Use of Proceeds for Maryland Healthy Soils Program

Committee: Economic Matters

Date: February 20, 2020

MGPA Position: SUPPORT

The Maryland Grain Producers Association serves as the voice of grain farmers growing corn, wheat, barley and sorghum across the state. On an annual basis, nearly a million acres of these crops are grown in Maryland.

House Bill 395 requires that – of the 20% of proceeds received by the Strategic Energy Investment Fund (SEIF) from the sale of allowances under the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) that are credited to a renewable and clean energy programs account – the greater of 10% or \$1.0 must be allocated to the Maryland Healthy Soils Program within the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA).

The Healthy Soils Advisory committee at MDA is tasked with coming up with a program to expand and quantify healthy soils practices in Maryland. These practices are extremely effective at carbon sequestration and therefore greenhouse gas reductions. One acre of corn can sequester upwards of 36,000 lbs of carbon and with heavy soils practices such as no-till, cover crops, soil amendments and planting green, this number can be even higher.

The issue at present is that there are no dedicated funds for the Healthy Soils Program. This bill would provide dedicated funding and at the same time meet the goals of the RGGI program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

MGPA respectfully asks for a favorable report on HB 395.