

February 25, 2020

SUPPORT HB 687/SB597: Agriculture - Cost-Sharing Program - Fixed Natural Filter Practices

Dear Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee:

I strongly support HB 687/SB597: Agriculture - Cost-Sharing Program - Fixed Natural Filter Practices. I believe farmers interested in soil- and climate-friendly projects deserve reliable and equitable access to state cost-share assistance.

As a Maryland conservation contractor I have often found myself wishing for another viable cost share program other than CREP. The unfortunate truth about CREP is that it has become unreliable, protracted, unaccountable and at times incomprehensible. I have had possible conservation participants walk away from projects because of the frustration and bewilderment that the attempted enrollment engenders. If Maryland could come up with a program that improves the experience of the possible participant, I would push them in that program's direction. People, farmers and landowners alike, want to do the right thing. A better mousetrap would go a long way in making that happen.

I strongly urge a favorable report on this important bill. Maryland has made significant progress on its Chesapeake Bay cleanup, but there is still work to be done. Reductions in pollution from agriculture will be critical to reaching the State's Clean Water Blueprint goals for 2025. Updating the MACS Program is a common-sense step to continue our progress.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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