



DELMARVA POULTRY INDUSTRY, INC.

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Date: March 3, 2020
To: Members of the Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs
From: Holly Porter, Executive Director
Re: SB 986 – Public Schools – Agricultural Education & Grant Programs - **Support**

Delmarva Poultry Industry, Inc. (DPI), the 1,700-member trade association representing the meat-chicken growers, processing companies and allied business members on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, the Eastern Shore of Virginia, and Delaware supports SB 986 and urges a favorable committee report.

SB 986 would require the county board of education to implement an agriculture science curriculum and an ag education program that would prepare students for successful careers and opportunities related to agriculture. This bill would also create a grant program to increased access to agricultural education in the state and encouraging participation by students in Maryland Future Farmers of America program and to pay teachers who are already going above and beyond to work on those programs into the summer months.

Nationally there are hundreds of thousands of agriculturally related jobs that go unfilled, in part because students are not aware of the career opportunities that exist. On Maryland's Eastern Shore there are more than 4,500 jobs directly tied to the chicken industry, and only 600 chicken growers. Our chicken companies and allied businesses are looking for students with skills and knowledge in biology, chemistry, math, engineering, networking, management, communications and everything in between. There are many opportunities in agriculture in our state, but students are not aware. Today, agriculture is a high-tech system involving skills related to most every discipline. I myself was a communications major in college – nothing at all specific to an agricultural degree.

There is already a great structure in place to help with promoting agriculture in the classroom – the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation. They have all the tools that any school would need to easily include agriculture in the curriculum. This bill would provide the guidance for that access.

Enactment of SB 986 will show support by the Maryland General Assembly for Maryland's number one industry – agriculture. And would encourage it to remain by giving students exposure to the tremendous career opportunities that exist right now and right here in our state and help steer them to an industry that is here for years to come.

We urge a favorable vote on SB 986.

Should you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact me at porter@dpichicken.com or 302-222-4069 or Nick Manis, Manis Canning & Associates, 410-263-7882.