Maryland Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary

Wes Moore, Governor
Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor
Kevin Atticks, Acting Secretary
Steven A. Connelly, Deputy Secretary

The Wayne A. Cawley, Jr. Building
50 Harry S Truman Parkway
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
mda.maryland.gov

Agriculture | Maryland's Leading Industry

410.841.5885 Baltimore/Washington
410.841.5846 Fax

Maryland Department of Agriculture

Legislative Comment

Date: January 25, 2023

BILL NUMBER: SENATE BILL 34

SHORT TITLE: DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE - STATE OMBUDSMAN FOR VALUE-ADDED AGRICULTURE

MDA POSITION: SUPPORT

SB 34 would establish the State Ombudsman for Value–Added Agriculture as a position in the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA). As the value-added agriculture industry in Maryland continues to grow, MDA believes it's necessary to create a dedicated position to support and assist new and existing producers and businesses to navigate the regulatory process at the local, state and federal levels, which can oftentimes be very cumbersome.

In February 2020, the Business Economic and Community Outreach Network (BEACON) of Salisbury University found that Maryland's Value-Added Agriculture industry supports close to 74,000 jobs and brings a total economic impact of over $20.6 billion annually to the state's economy. This level of economic activity, in turn, adds nearly $875 million to the State's fiscal resources.

MDA is very supportive of value-added agriculture and sees it as a way to keep agriculture viable and sustainable in Maryland. The department gets calls from farmers frequently who are looking to diversify their farming operations, and we work closely with them on how to navigate different processes in other state agencies. A dedicated State Ombudsman for Value–Added Agriculture would help the department to continue to expand the industry in Maryland. Therefore, MDA respectfully requests a favorable report on SB 34.

If you have additional questions, please contact Steve Connelly, Deputy Secretary, at steve.connelly@maryland.gov or (410) 841-5881.