



Calvert County Farm Bureau

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February 7, 2023

Maryland General Assembly
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Maryland Senators and Delegates:

The Calvert County Farm Bureau is sending this letter in support of **HBO389B-Department of Agriculture -State Ombudsman for Value-Added Agriculture** by Delegate Morgan and **SB34** by Senator Hester. We are encouraged by these bills to establish an ombudsman for value-added agriculture in the Maryland Department of Agriculture.

Pursuing a value-added agriculture business is often confusing and overwhelming. It requires coordination and compliance with multiple Maryland state agencies, including but not limited to local health departments, Maryland Department of the Environment, Assessment and Taxation, Department of Labor, Natural Resources and Department of Commerce. Having a dedicated ombudsman within the Maryland Department of Agriculture to advocate for and help our local farmers navigate this process would be immeasurable. We believe this would encourage and enable more farms an opportunity to diversify their business and increase their future sustainability and success.

Overall, Maryland farms seek to diversify their sustainability and profitability for not only their current generation but for generations to come. In doing this, they highlight the diversity of products and commerce that Maryland can profit from and be proud of as consumers and producers. Value-added agriculture businesses can help boost and further strengthen Maryland's economy as Marylanders invest in locally grown and produced food and other products.

Calvert County Farm Bureau is in full support of Delegate Morgan's and Senator Hester's bills and we further urge the committee to support **HBO389B-Department of Agriculture -State Ombudsman for Value-Added Agriculture** and the positive outcomes the ombudsman position can bring to our local farmers in Calvert County.

Sincerely,

Cathy Cosgrove
President, Calvert County Farm Bureau