



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

Senate Bill 240

Department of Agriculture – Maryland Agricultural Commission and Young Farmers

Date: January 28, 2025

To: Education, Energy, & Environment Committee

Position: **Favorable**

From: Jared Planz,
Clagett Farm Program Manager

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** SB 240 which establishes a Committee on Young Farmers, which will replace the existing Young Farmers Advisory Board. SB 240 will also add representation for young and beginning farmers to the state Agriculture Commission. We believe this bill is a crucial step toward addressing the unique challenges faced by young farmers while amplifying their voices in shaping the future of the agriculture industry in the state.

A key part of CBF's mission is engaging and supporting young farmers through hands-on workshops and mentorship program. Recently, we have hosted workshops focused on BIPOC farmers, covering essential topics such as high tunnel construction, recordkeeping, and microirrigation. Additionally, our beginner farmer trainees – many of whom have gone on to establish successful farm businesses across the state – receive comprehensive training on farm basics, regenerative practices, and strategies for creating viable farm businesses. We have also created resource guides tailored to young and beginning farmers directing them towards key resources, industry-specific grant and loan funding opportunities, and established industry contacts. Our recordkeeping system has been adopted by over 60 young farmers across the region, helping to build more sustainable and profitable agricultural operations.

The success of CBF's engagement efforts with young farmers demonstrate both the significant need for guidance and resources, and the way young farmers can thrive in the industry with appropriate support. With the average farmer now over 58 years old, we recognize the critical importance of equipping and empowering young farmers. Their success is vital for fostering a thriving local agricultural economy and ensuring the long-term health of the Chesapeake Bay. **CBF supports the Maryland Department of Agriculture's continued efforts to better engage young farmers and request the Committee's FAVORABLE report on SB 240.**

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at mstegman@cbf.org.

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 200,000 members and e-subscribers, including 71,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.