



Maryland Farm Bureau

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February 4, 2026

To: House Health Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

RE: **Support of HB272 Food Establishments - Lavatory Requirement and On-Farm Food Service Facility License**

On behalf of the over 7,000 member families of the Maryland Farm Bureau, I submit written testimony in support of House Bill 272. This legislation provides long-needed clarity and flexibility for on-farm food service operations, an increasingly important component of Maryland agriculture as farms diversify through agritourism, value-added enterprises, and direct-to-consumer sales. HB272 modernizes state law by allowing certain agritourism-related food establishments to meet lavatory requirements using a portable toilet placed at least 25 feet from a well, recognizing the seasonal and outdoor nature of these operations and reducing unnecessary infrastructure burdens on farms.

A key strength of HB272 is its commitment to low, predictable costs. By capping the on-farm food service facility license fee at no more than \$100 and establishing a single, one-year statewide license, the bill lowers barriers to participation and prevents the patchwork of ad hoc local permitting approaches that too often create confusion and added expense for producers. Maintaining affordability and uniformity is essential to ensuring that small and beginning farms can participate in agritourism and food-based activities—an objective fully consistent with Maryland Farm Bureau policy, which supports agritourism, value-added production, and fee structures that do not place unnecessary financial burdens on farmers.

HB272 also appropriately directs the Maryland Department of Health, in consultation with the Departments of Agriculture and the Environment, to develop regulations tailored to the realities of on-farm food service. The bill explicitly requires consideration of water access, wastewater management, outdoor cooking, and the use of existing farm structures for food preparation and patron seating—areas where flexibility is essential to align food-service standards with agricultural settings. This multi-agency approach mirrors Maryland Farm Bureau's longstanding support for regulatory frameworks that are science-based, economically reasonable, and reflective of the practical operations of working farms.



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Finally, HB272's creation of a clear, uniform licensing pathway strengthens Maryland agriculture by reducing uncertainty and helping farmers safely and legally expand their offerings to meet consumer demand. By acknowledging the unique nature of on-farm food service while upholding appropriate public-health protections, the bill strikes the right balance and supports the continued growth of rural economies.

For these reasons, the Maryland Farm Bureau respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 272.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyler Hough". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the typed name.

Tyler Hough

Director of Government Relations

Please contact Tyler Hough, tyough@marylandfb.org, with any questions