

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2004 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Senate Bill 392 (Senators Middleton and Dyson)
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Environmental Matters

Young Farmers Advisory Board

This bill establishes a 12-member Young Farmers Advisory Board within the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) to, among other things: (1) communicate the importance of young and beginning farmers to agriculture in the State; (2) identify and address issues relating to young and beginning farmers in the State and make recommendations to the Maryland Agricultural Commission; and (3) establish committees as necessary to develop projects relating to the aspects of life for young and beginning farmers in the State. MDA must provide staff for the board. The chairperson or a designee must attend meetings of the Maryland Agricultural Commission and provide a quarterly report to the commission. A member may not receive compensation but is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the standard State travel regulations.

The bill sunsets September 30, 2007.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Any expense reimbursements for board members and staffing costs for MDA are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing budgeted resources.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: The Maryland Agricultural Commission within MDA consists of 24 members. The commission is charged with formulating and making proposals for the

advancement of Maryland agriculture by serving as an advisory body to the Secretary of Agriculture. The commission is required to meet monthly unless, by majority vote, it decides otherwise. The commission employs a full-time secretary whose duties, at a minimum, are to carry out the work of the commission and to assist the Secretary in the promotion of the agricultural industry.

Background: According to a recent University of Maryland report, the farming sector and its related industries accounted for about \$5 billion (3%) of the Maryland gross State product in 1999 and employed 62,700 people. The same report indicated that the age of farm operators has been rising for two decades and that the average Maryland farm operator is now over 54 years old, highlighting the importance of a flow of new replacement farmers.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: HB 755 (Delegate Wood, *et al.*) – Environmental Matters.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Agriculture, University of Maryland (Center for Agricultural and Natural Resource Policy), Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 19, 2004
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