

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2004 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 825 (Delegate Costa, *et al.*)

Environmental Matters

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Anne Arundel County - Right to Farm

This bill authorizes the Anne Arundel County Council to adopt an ordinance, resolution, or regulation, or take any other action considered necessary, to protect a person's right to farm or engage in agricultural or forestry operations. The county council must first hold a public hearing and provide reasonable notice of the hearing.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None. The bill would not directly affect State operations or finances.

Local Effect: The bill would not materially affect Anne Arundel County finances.

Small Business Effect: Potential meaningful.

Analysis

Current Law: Anne Arundel County does not have the authorization to adopt a right to farm ordinance or regulation. This authority has been granted to several other counties, including St. Mary's County (Chapter 35 of 2002), Garrett County (Chapter 403 of 2001), Washington County (Chapter 442 of 1999), Somerset County (Chapter 739 of 1998), Dorchester County (Chapter 677 of 1997), Charles County (Chapter 64 of 1996), and Carroll County (Chapter 58 of 1994).

Background: Approximately 13% of the land area in Anne Arundel County is devoted to agriculture. There are 412 farms in operation in the county, with the average size totaling 84 acres. The total value of agricultural commodities produced in Anne Arundel

County is estimated at \$12.6 million, not including horses and ornamental and nursery stock, which represent a substantial portion of the county's agricultural activity.

Small Business Effect: According to a recent University of Maryland report titled *Economic Situation and Prospects for Maryland Agriculture*, Maryland has 2.15 million acres of farmland, over one-third of the State's land area. The State has 12,400 farms producing more than 160 different crops and livestock products. In 1999, the farming sector and its related industries accounted for about \$5 billion (3%) of the gross State product and employed 62,700 people. To the extent this bill would further strengthen agricultural activity in Anne Arundel County by granting farmers additional protections, small businesses involved in agricultural activities would be positively impacted.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: SB 202 (Senator Greenip, *et al.*) – Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs.

Information Source(s): Anne Arundel County, Maryland Department of Agriculture, University of Maryland, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 11, 2004
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Analysis by: Lesley Cook

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510