

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2012 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

House Bill 423

(St. Mary's County Delegation)

Environmental Matters

Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

St. Mary's County - Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board - Membership

This bill requires the Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board in St. Mary's County to be composed of five members and to have at least three members who actively pursue the production of agricultural products for profit.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: None.

Local Effect: None. The bill codifies current practice.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law/Background: Except in Worcester County, statute requires that each agricultural preservation advisory board consist of five members, at least three of whom are owner-operators of commercial farms who earn more than 50% or more of their income from farming.

The Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board in St. Mary's County advises the Board of County Commissioners on the approval of easement purchases by the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF). The board's five members serve five-year terms and are appointed by the Board of County Commissioners.

MALPF, which was established by the General Assembly in 1977 and is part of the Maryland Department of Agriculture, purchases agricultural preservation easements that restrict development on prime farmland and woodland in perpetuity. In addition to funding from the State transfer tax, MALPF is funded with agricultural land transfer taxes, local matching funds, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Federal Farmland Protection Program. MALPF settled on its first purchased easement in October 1980. As of the end of fiscal 2011, MALPF had cumulatively purchased 2,043 farms covering 279,223 acres.

St. Mary's County advises that the bill is consistent with the Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board's current composition and practices.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: None.

Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): St. Mary's County, Maryland Department of Agriculture, Department of Legislative Services

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mc/lgc

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