

Department of Legislative Services

Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 262

(Chair, Environment and Transportation Committee)(By Request - Departmental - Agriculture) and Delegate Holmes

Environment and Transportation

Education, Energy, and the Environment

Department of Agriculture - Maryland Agricultural Commission and Young Farmers

This departmental bill (1) alters the membership and appointment process of the Maryland Agricultural Commission (MAC) within the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA); (2) establishes the Committee on Young Farmers, staffed by MDA; and (3) repeals the Young Farmers Advisory Board within MDA. The bill also makes a conforming change to the statute establishing the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation board of trustees.

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill does not materially affect State finances or operations. Any changes in expense reimbursements and staffing costs for MDA are assumed to be minimal.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: MDA has determined that this bill has minimal or no impact on small business (attached). The Department of Legislative Services concurs with this assessment. (The attached assessment does not reflect amendments to the bill.)

Analysis

Bill Summary:

Maryland Agricultural Commission

The bill makes the following changes to MAC:

- updates the names of specific members of the commission;
- alters language relating to the appointment of commission members;
- removes from the commission membership one representative from each of the following industries: (1) nursery; (2) dairy; (3) poultry; (4) services related to agriculture; and (5) tobacco; and
- adds to the commission membership one representative from each of the following groups: (1) the controlled environmental agriculture industry; (2) socially disadvantaged farmers; (3) veteran farmers; (4) the newly established Committee on Young Farmers (discussed below); (5) urban and small farmers; and (6) new and beginning farmers.

Young Farmers Advisory Board and Committee on Young Farmers

The bill repeals the existing Young Farmers Advisory Board and instead establishes the Committee on Young Farmers with similar duties. MDA must provide staff for the committee. The committee must (1) communicate to the general public, State government, and MAC 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 MAC; and (3) hold meetings at least quarterly.

The bill establishes provisions governing the membership of the committee. Committee members may not receive compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for expenses.

Current Law:

Maryland Agricultural Commission

MAC, within MDA, consists of 31 members appointed by the Governor that represent various agriculture and agriculture-related industries. The mission of the commission is to formulate and make proposals for the advancement of Maryland agriculture by serving as an advisory body to the Secretary of Agriculture on matters pertaining to agriculture. The commission's current priorities include (1) encouraging the agricultural community to be more proactive on issues affecting agriculture and rural life; (2) evaluating farm/agriculture industry labor and regulations; (3) increasing public awareness of food safety; and (4) supporting MDA's efforts to promote agriculture.

Commission members may not receive compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for expenses.

Young Farmers Advisory Board

The Young Farmers Advisory Board within MDA consists of 20 members appointed by the Governor. Among other duties, the advisory board must (1) communicate to the general public, the federal government, the State government, and MAC the importance of young and beginning farmers to agriculture in the State and (2) identify and address issues relating to young and beginning farmers in the State and make recommendations to MAC.

MDA must provide staff for the advisory board. Advisory board members may not receive compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for expenses.

Background: MDA advises that the bill is intended to streamline the efficiency of its advisory boards and commissions while ensuring that the agricultural industry is represented and reflective of modern agriculture. Specifically, the bill aims to modernize the appointed representation on MAC, remove duplicative representation, and create new members to represent agriculture in the 21st century. MDA further advises that the Committee on Young Farmers is dedicated to fulfilling the mission of the Young Farmers Advisory Board and that repealing the advisory board and establishing the committee (with representation on MAC) optimizes its efficiency.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: SB 240 (Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee)(By Request - Departmental - Agriculture) - Education, Energy, and the Environment.

Information Source(s): Maryland Department of Agriculture; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - January 20, 2025
rh/lgc Third Reader - March 17, 2025
Revised - Amendment(s) - March 17, 2025

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ANALYSIS OF ECONOMIC IMPACT ON SMALL BUSINESSES

TITLE OF BILL: Department of Agriculture – Maryland Agricultural Commission and Young Farmers

BILL NUMBER: HB 262

PREPARED BY: Harrison Palmer, Executive Secretary, Maryland Agricultural Commission

PART A. ECONOMIC IMPACT RATING

This agency estimates that the proposed bill:

X WILL HAVE MINIMAL OR NO ECONOMIC IMPACT ON MARYLAND SMALL BUSINESS

OR

___ WILL HAVE MEANINGFUL ECONOMIC IMPACT ON MARYLAND SMALL BUSINESSES

PART B. ECONOMIC IMPACT ANALYSIS