

HB 1228

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
First Reader

House Bill 1228 (Montgomery County Delegation)
Environment and Transportation

Department of Commerce - Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve Study
MC 15-25

This bill requires the Department of Commerce to study the tourist and visitor economy of the Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve to develop (1) a deeper understanding of the tourist and visitor economy of the reserve and (2) policies and recommendations to help the reserve thrive. The department may consult with government agencies, academic institutions, and stakeholders to complete the study. By June 30, 2026, Commerce must report its findings and recommendations to the members of the Montgomery County Delegation. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2025.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: General fund expenditures for Commerce increase by *at least* \$250,000 in FY 2026 for data and consultants to complete the required study. Revenues are not affected.

(in dollars)	FY 2026	FY 2027	FY 2028	FY 2029	FY 2030
Revenues	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
GF Expenditure	250,000	0	0	0	0
Net Effect	(\$250,000)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0

Note: () = decrease; GF = general funds; FF = federal funds; SF = special funds; - = indeterminate increase; (-) = indeterminate decrease

Local Effect: The bill does not materially affect local government finances or operations.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: In conducting the study, Commerce must:

- establish a geofence around the Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve and other key attractions in the area and use geolocation technology to gather information on visitor volume and how those visitors interact with other parts of the regional economy;
- engage with visitors, including by surveying them, to gather information about visitor behavior and attitudes;
- consider whether in-depth interviews with residents, businesses, and other stakeholders are necessary; and
- review existing data models to gather information on the upstream and downstream impacts of visitation to the region.

In considering the data and its findings, Commerce must:

- examine how tourists and visitors view the reserve, including why they visit, where they came from, and what attractions they found most compelling and why;
- identify the small businesses, recreation sites, and historic sites that are located in the reserve and (1) analyze how tourism and visitors contribute to these operations and their success; (2) assess and evaluate the barriers that may deter visitors from coming to the reserve; and (3) develop an overall assessment of the economic impact of tourism in the reserve; and
- make recommendations regarding policies and programs that can help promote and preserve the reserve and better support the small businesses, recreation sites, and historic sites that depend on the visitor and tourist economy.

Current Law: Commerce’s mission, generally, is to strengthen the Maryland economy. The department develops and implements programs that aim to generate new jobs or retain existing jobs, attract business investment in new or expanding companies, and promote the State’s strategic assets. Business assistance is provided through a combination of investments, loans, conditional loans, grants, and tax credits. Among other general powers and duties, the department’s Division of Tourism, Film, and the Arts must stimulate development of tourism business in the State.

State Expenditures: Commerce advises that it requires both granular geolocation data and additional consultant services to conduct the study in the relatively short timeframe required by the bill. Commerce estimates the cost for required geolocation data is \$150,000, with additional costs of *at least* \$100,000 to complete the remainder of the study. Accordingly, general fund expenditures increase by *at least* \$250,000 in fiscal 2026.

Additional Comments: The 93,000-acre Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve was established by the county in 1980. A detailed [map](#) published online by the

Montgomery Countryside Alliance shows the area and some of the related businesses, recreation sites, and historic sites.

Additional Information

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

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Commerce; Montgomery Countryside Alliance; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 27, 2025
caw/ljm

Analysis by: Stephen M. Ross

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