

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 1228

(Montgomery County Delegation)

Environment and Transportation

Education, Energy, and the Environment

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

This bill requires the Department of Commerce, in coordination with specified State, local, and nonprofit entities, to study economic development in and the tourist and visitor economy of the Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve to develop (1) a deeper understanding of the tourist and visitor impact on the reserve and (2) policies and recommendations to help the reserve thrive. Commerce must conduct the study in coordination with the Montgomery County Planning Board, the Montgomery County Office of Agricultural Services, the University of Maryland Extension for Montgomery County, and Visit Montgomery, subject to specified requirements. 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: Commerce can coordinate with other State, local, and nonprofit entities and complete the required report with existing budgeted resources. The University System of Maryland, specifically the University of Maryland Extension for Montgomery County, can coordinate with Commerce on the study with existing budgeted resources. Revenues are not affected.

Local Effect: Montgomery County can handle the bill's requirements with existing budgeted resources. Revenues are not affected.

Small Business Effect: Minimal.

Analysis

Bill Summary: In conducting the study, Commerce, the Montgomery County Planning Board, the Montgomery County Office of Agricultural Services, the University of Maryland Extension for Montgomery County, and Visit Montgomery must:

- examine how tourists and visitors view the Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve, including why they visit, where they come from, and what attractions they find most compelling and why;
- identify the small businesses, recreation sites, and historic sites that are located in the reserve and analyze how tourism and visitors contribute to these operations and their success;
- assess and evaluate the barriers that may deter visitors from coming to the reserve;
- develop an overall assessment of economic development and 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.

Commerce and the other specified entities must, if data is available or the action required is necessary:

- work with relevant local organizations to gather information on visitor volume at the reserve and other key attractions in the area and how those visitors interact with other parts of the regional economy;
- engage with visitors, including by surveying visitors, 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.

Commerce must coordinate the preparation of, synthesize, and analyze the data made available for the study and may consult with government agencies, academic institutions, and stakeholders to complete the study.

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.

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.

Visit Montgomery is a 501(c)(6) nonprofit and the destination marketing organization for Montgomery County, Maryland.

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; University System of Maryland; Montgomery County; Visit Montgomery; Montgomery Countryside Alliance; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 27, 2025
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