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MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

LEGISLATIVE COMMENT

DATE: February 17, 2020

BILL NUMBER: HOUSE BILL 305

SHORT TITLE: DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE - MARYLAND MADE PROMOTION FUND

MDA POSITION: INFORMATION

EXPLANATION:

This legislation will require the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) to administer a fund to develop and promote the use of a “Maryland Made” logo to promote alcoholic beverages made with at least 51% Maryland ingredients.

MDA may establish an application process for the use of the logo and charge fees for its use to be put into the fund.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Maryland’s Best is a program managed by the Maryland Department of Agriculture’s Marketing and Agribusiness Development section. Our mission is to link Maryland farmers with consumers through this Web site, promotions and advertising. The program is primarily supported by federal funding from the U.S Department of Agriculture’s Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, supplemented by State funds (due to restrictions on federal funding) used to promote dairy, meat, poultry, and agritourism.

MDA currently supports the State’s alcohol beverage industry primarily in connecting Maryland companies with international buyers. In 2019, MDA brought in buyers from Sweden, France and the Czech Republic. In 2018, MDA brought in buyers from Canada, which successfully created business for Maryland companies. In 2020 and 2021, MDA anticipates bringing more buyers from the EU and taking Maryland companies to Canada to showcase their products.

Brewers, wineries, and distilleries have also participated in MDA's Maryland's Best Expo, held each January in Annapolis. This event brings in restaurant buyers, grocery store chains, and distributors to meet with Maryland farmers, seafood companies, niche food producers, and craft beverage companies. More than 400 people attend it annually.

MDA additionally manages the Wine and Grape Promotion Fund. Authorized in 2005, the fund provides grants to nongovernmental organizations to encourage: (1) the production and consumption of Maryland wine; and (2) the production of wine grapes in the State.

If you have additional questions, please contact Cassie Shirk, Director of Legislation and Governmental Affairs, at cassie.shirk@maryland.gov or 410-841-5886.