



Maryland Department of Agriculture

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MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE LEGISLATIVE COMMENT DATE: March 14, 2020

BILL NUMBER: SENATE BILL 118

SHORT TITLE: LAND USE - ALCOHOL PRODUCTION AND AGRICULTURAL ALCOHOL PRODUCTION

MDA POSITION: SUPPORT

EXPLANATION:

This legislation establishes a specific, authorized definition of “alcohol production” and “agricultural alcohol production” for a local jurisdiction to adopt by local ordinance, resolution, law, or rule. This is a definition in the Land Use Article. While it refers to the Alcohol Article, it does not make any changes to the alcohol law.

The definitions established in SB 118 are not a mandate but will serve as a uniform standard in state law to help county and local governments regulate their own agricultural alcohol producers.

Diversification is key to profitability for many Maryland farmers and producers. Value-added commodities—including beer, wine and spirits—continue to grow in popularity and provide an important source of income for agricultural operations across the state. Creating consistent definitions of these terms ensures that our family farms have the clarity they need when making important business decisions for their farm operations.

Jurisdictions have been looking to Virginia for language, and this would provide needed clarification in Maryland code as to the general activities permitted by state law for our farm and non-farm alcohol producers, which we hope would form the foundation of county text amendments.

This proposal is similar to a 2018 law which established a statewide definition of “agritourism” for adoption by local jurisdictions.

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