



Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts

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Senate Bill 295 - Agriculture - Cost-Sharing Program - Sale of Harvested Cover Crops

Committee: EHEA

February 11, 2020

MASCD Position: OPPOSED

The Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts represents the 24 districts throughout the state of Maryland that spearhead the design and implementation of conservation practices on the landscape. Maryland's conservation districts are responsible for implementation of the state's cover crop program. Implementing the cover crop program includes signing farmers up, spot checking to ensure planting and burn down and making sure the farmers get paid.

Senate Bill 295 would require the cover crop program to pay a commodity cover crop payment for two-row barley grown for the purpose of malting, brewing, distilling in Maryland. While MASCD does not oppose the growing of two-row barley for these purposes, we do oppose farmers getting a cover crop payment for planting, harvesting and selling a commodity crop. Maryland eliminated the commodity cover crop payment in 2017. Prior to that, farmers growing winter crops that did not fertilize them in the Fall were eligible for a reduced cover crop payment. When the acres of traditional cover crops reached a level where the majority, or all, the funding could be expended on traditional cover crops, the payment was eliminated.

Traditional cover crops are those that never receive fertilizer, are grown throughout the winter and then killed in the spring. This allows that biomass to remain in the field for organic matter and the nutrients taken up in to the crop to be used for the next crop. Kind of like recycling! This provides the greatest water quality benefit and also the greatest credit for nutrient reduction in the Chesapeake Bay Model.

MASCD feels paying for a specific type of commodity cover crop is inequitable and the funding is better utilized for the traditional cover crops that provide the most benefit to the Bay.

MASCD respectfully asks for your unfavorable report on SB295.

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