



Maryland Grain Producers Association
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Senate Bill 964 - Agriculture - Hemp Research and Production – Prohibitions

Committee: EHEA

Date: February 25, 2020

MGPA Position: **OPPOSED**

The Maryland Grain Producers Association serves as the voice of grain farmers growing corn, wheat, barley and sorghum across the state. On an annual basis, nearly a million acres of these crops are grown in Maryland.

Senate Bill 964 prohibits the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) from certifying and registering a site under the Hemp Research Pilot Program or licensing a person to produce hemp under the Hemp Farming Program if the area where the hemp will be grown is located within two miles of a residential community with 10 or more residences.

Many of Maryland's grain farmers have considered, or already begun, growing hemp as a diversification in the face of low commodity prices. Hemp has the potential to be a very high value per acre crop. Hemp is a federally approved and regulated crop. Prohibiting hemp from being grown within two miles of ten or more residences would essentially prohibit hemp from being researched or grown anywhere in the state of Maryland. This bill essentially outlaws growing hemp in the state.

As the population of Maryland has increased, urban and suburban sprawl continues to put residential development in closer proximity to agriculture. To limit agricultural production, almost solely based on smell, is possibly a degradation of Maryland's Right to Farm Law and sets a dangerous precedent for other agricultural operations. In order to give you an idea of just how limiting this legislation would be. By road, two miles is the distance between Navy Marine Corps Stadium and the Anne Arundel Medical Center. Imagine drawing a two-mile circle around every farm in Maryland. We believe you would find very few, if any, that do not have a community with ten or more homes within two miles.

When a person purchases a home in Maryland in a rural and agricultural area, they sign a Right to Farm acknowledgement that warns buyers of land that the county has determined inconveniences and discomforts occasioned by nearby farm operations (i.e., noise, odors, fumes, low flying aircraft, etc.) are not considered interference with use and enjoyment of the land.

This precedent opens the door to limit other things covered in Right to Farm such as low flying aircrafts used to plan cover crops, noise or lights from combines required to work late in to the night in order to harvest crops, traffic from trucks transporting grain to the mill and everything else.

MGPA respectfully asks for an unfavorable report on SB 964.