

## Opposition to SB 964 & HB 510

Mr. Chairman and Committee Members

We urge you ***not to pass*** SB 964/ HB 510: Agriculture – Hemp Research and Production – Prohibitions. This bill would remove the ability of the Maryland Department of Agriculture to issue a permit to grow hemp on a farm within two miles of a residential community of 10 or more residents.

We are growing hemp on land zoned as exclusive for farm use, together with corn, soybean, wheat, cabbages, and other crops. The Maryland Right-to-Farm law, which is designed to protect agricultural operations, such as dairy, grain, fruit, vegetables, and poultry, or traditional forestry operations, with an affirmative defense to nuisance suits, should apply to hemp. We are not growing an illegal crop. Most of us have owned our farms for over 35 years. This year, the proposed legislation would limit hemp growing to a two-mile distance from a residential community. Next year, the limit would be four miles.

The question is: How can the Maryland Right-to-Farm Law be applied in this instance since hemp is an alternative and diversified crop?

It is evident that the population in rural Maryland has increased along with urban sprawl. Agriculture produces lots of sights, smells, sounds that people don't like. It's the nature of the business.

As hemp growing has flourished, so too have complaints that its smell is annoying, causes headaches, makes allergies worse and devalues neighboring property. Yes, there is a slight odor, but it's only for two months out of the year. There is no clinical research data to prove that the hemp smell is unsafe.

Other agricultural activities certainly have their smells. For instance, poultry operations have a distinct odor, pig farms have a decidedly off-putting aroma, and dairy farms can make you question your decision to drink milk.

As opposed to more traditional crops like corn, soybean, wheat, and cotton, hemp is much more efficient and eco-friendlier. Hemp takes half as much water as corn and other agricultural products. Additionally, hemp does not require the use of herbicides or pesticides. It's carbon-neutral or carbon positive, meaning it puts more nutrients back into the soil than it takes out.

### Among environmental and economic benefits to growing hemp

- Hemp plants take about three months to grow and pulp from the fiber can be used to produce paper. Paper trees take decades to grow, so there's a faster return.
- The fiber can be made into absorbent textiles that can be used for oil spills.
- Hemp seed can be used for cooking as a gluten-free flour substitute.
- Hemp hearts can be ground up with some water for dairy-free hemp milk.
- Hemp seed oil can also be made into many cosmetic and edible products.

It should be noted that during World War II, the U.S. Department of Agriculture ran a program called "Hemp for Victory!" to encourage farmers to grow hemp because of a shortage of imported Manila hemp that was used in ships' rigging.

In conclusion: Growing hemp has no impact on air quality. Hemp farmers should not be subjected to a limit on how far the farm located in a rural area has to be from a sparsely-populated residential area.

Thank you,

Ergibe Boyd

Prince George's County Hemp Farmer