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**BILL NO.:**            **SB 964**

**TITLE:**                **Agriculture – Hemp Research and Production – Prohibitions**

**SPONSOR:**           **Senator Hettleman**

**COMMITTEE:**        **Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs**

**POSITION:**         **SUPPORT**

**DATE:**                **February 25, 2020**

Baltimore County **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 964 – Agriculture – Hemp Research and Production – Prohibitions. This bill prohibits the Maryland Department of Agriculture 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.

As farming and agriculture evolve, it is important to ensure that regulation of the new products and crops entering the marketplace balance the needs of farmers, consumers, and the residents in close proximity to those crops. Hemp farming is still in an exploratory stage, and Federal, State and local regulations are just beginning to catch up. Baltimore County is home to hundreds of square miles of land designated for agricultural use, some of which lies directly adjacent to residential communities. Baltimore County has concerns relating to the effects hemp farming will have on the residents of these communities, as a full body of research does not yet exist regarding the health and quality of life effects of living near a hemp farm. SB 964 protects the residents of these communities from potential adverse effects while keeping the overwhelming majority of Maryland’s agricultural land available for hemp farming.

Accordingly, Baltimore County requests a **FAVORABLE** report on SB 964. For more information, please contact Chuck Conner, Chief Legislative Officer, 443-900-6582.