



Maryland Grain Producers Association
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House Bill 547 - Agriculture - License to Produce Hemp - Limitation

Committee: Environment & Transportation

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.

House Bill 547 prohibits the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) from issuing a license to produce hemp under their program if MDA determines that the land subject to the license is located within 25 feet of a property or properties with three or more individual residences, unless the applicant agrees to produce hemp in an indoor facility that exhausts its fumes. This does not just apply to the physical location of the hemp production but the border of the entire property/parcel it is on. Additionally, a home on the property where the hemp is being grown counts toward the three residence total.

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 25 feet of three or more residences is extremely limiting. 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.

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 HB 547.