



February 25, 2020

To: House Environment & Transportation Committee

From: MidAtlantic Farm Credit

Bill: **HB 574 – Agriculture – License to Produce Hemp - Limitation**

Position: **Oppose**

MidAtlantic Farm Credit is a member-owned cooperative supporting rural communities and agriculture with reliable, consistent credit and financial services in good times and bad. Headquartered in Westminster, MD, we are one of the largest agricultural lenders on the East Coast with almost \$2.9 billion dollars in loans outstanding to over 11,500 member-owners representing the full range of agriculture throughout our five-state territory.

This bill would prohibit the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) from issuing a license to a person to produce hemp if they determine that the land subject to the license application 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 with an approved odor reducing apparatus.

This measure if passed, could set multiple precedents unnerving to Maryland's agriculture community. Establishing in statute that a producer must alter their method of production and prescribe air purification based on their proximity to a property with 3 residences could put existing growers – Maryland taxpayers that have invested time, sweat, property, and money – out of compliance through no faulty action of their own and infringe on their Right to Farm.

Additionally, this bill would supersede local planning and zoning laws, effectively dictating property line setbacks without doing so through traditional channels like the comprehensive planning process or a local text amendment.

In an effort to ensure the ability of Maryland farmers to productively engage in the growing of current and future legal agricultural crops and livestock, MidAtlantic Farm Credit respectfully urges an **Unfavorable** report for **HB 574**.

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