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POSITION STATEMENT

House Bill 0008 – Maryland Strategic Energy Investment Fund – Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative –
Use of Proceeds for Maryland Healthy Soils Program
Economic Matters Committee
January 14, 2021

The Rural Maryland Council **SUPPORTS** House Bill 0008 – Maryland Strategic Energy Investment Fund – Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative – Use of Proceeds for Maryland Healthy Soils Program. This bill specifies that funds be allocated for the Maryland Healthy Soils Program from certain renewable and clean energy programs account within the Maryland Strategic Energy Investment Fund.

In 2017, Governor Larry Hogan signed legislation establishing Maryland’s Healthy Soils Program and designated the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) as the state lead on healthy soils as our agricultural landscape plays a major role in sequestering and mitigating carbon through good soil management. MDA was charged with developing a program that would 1) Improve health, yield, and profitability of soils; 2) Increase biological activity and carbon sequestration in agricultural soils; 3) Promote further education and adoption of healthy soil practices.

The Healthy Soils program has been extremely successful in meeting these program objectives by providing financial and technical assistance to farmers; training for conservation staff advisors; collecting regional soil health data; and, organizing educational programs, including on-farm events and farmer-to-farmer learning networks. To date, the program has heavily relied on grant funding and HB0008 would provide a supplemental and more continuous funding source to continue this valuable work. The Council respectfully requests your favorable support of HB0008.

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) brings together citizens, community-based organizations, federal, state, county and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to collectively address the needs of Rural Maryland communities. We provide a venue for members of agriculture and natural resource-based industries, health care facilities, educational institutions, economic and community development organizations, for-profit and nonprofit corporations, and government agencies to cross traditional boundaries, share information, and address in a more holistic way the special needs and opportunities in Rural Maryland.

“A Collective Voice for Rural Maryland”