



**House Bill 8 (Delegates Krimm & Stein)
Maryland Strategic Energy Investment Fund - Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative
- Use of Proceeds for Maryland Healthy Soils Program**

Position: Support

January 14, 2021

Dear Chairman Davis and Members of the Economic Matters Committee:

I am writing in support of House Bill 8, sponsored by Delegate Krimm, which directs \$500,000 from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative to the Maryland Healthy Soils Grant Program. This modest, but critical amount is necessary to support this important, forward-thinking work and will continue to make Maryland a leader nationally in promoting healthy soils for both economic viability of farms as well as climate mitigation efforts.

The Million Acre Challenge works with farmers, policy-makers, and consumers to support healthy soils on Maryland farms across the greater Chesapeake region. This collaborative aims to catalyze the growing movement to achieve no fewer than one million acres of healthy soils in Maryland by 2030. This is a collaborative project of:

- **Chesapeake Bay Foundation**
- **Fair Farms** (a project of Waterkeepers Chesapeake)
- **Future Harvest**
- **Hatcher Group**
- **Institute for Energy and Environmental Research**
- **Institute for Local Self-Reliance**

During the 2017 General Assembly Session, Maryland passed a law to create the Maryland Healthy Soils Program under the Department of Agriculture (MDA). MDA was charged with promoting farming practices that contribute to healthy soils—practices that increase organic matter, improve soil structure and water and nutrient holding capacity, and sequester carbon and reduce greenhouse gas emissions— by providing to farmers incentives such as education, technical assistance, and funding. Members of the

not-yet-formed Million Acre Challenge advocated strongly for the legislation and celebrated the bill's passage. But, there's more work to be done. **For Maryland to truly protect our vital farm soils and combat climate change, we must ensure that the program receives adequate funding to carry out this critical work.**

Farmers have tremendous potential to be real agents of change when it comes to climate change mitigation. By implementing practices that promote soil health and sequester carbon, they can play a critical role in drawing down greenhouse gases. It is imperative that we provide our farming community with opportunities to take on this role. Increased soil health and carbon sequestration will not only have profound benefits to Maryland farmers' bottom lines—it will make farmers more resilient to extreme weather brought on by climate change.

House Bill 8 will help ensure the viability and resilience of Maryland farms, position farmers as leaders in the climate movement, and substantially reduce the amount of GHGs in the atmosphere. We stand strongly in support of this bill and urge the Committee to adopt a favorable report of House Bill 8.

Sincerely,

Amanda Cather
Project Director
Million Acre Challenge
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Additional Supporters:

Caroline Selle, *Winding Root Farm*
Carolyn E. Ricketts, *Neighborhood Sun*
Devora Kimelman-Block, *KOL Foods, LLC*
Gabriel Bustos, *Elemental Education*
Greg Mason, *The White Oak Tavern*
Melanie Smith-Bell, *Community FARE*