



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education

House Bill 8

Maryland Strategic Energy Investment Fund – Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative –
Use of Proceeds for Maryland Healthy Soils Program

Date: January 14, 2021
To: House Economic Matters Committee

Position: Support with Amendments
Contact: Alan Girard, Eastern Shore Director,
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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS HB 8 with AMENDMENT**. This legislation acknowledges the role of healthy soils in sequestration of greenhouse gases by adding the Maryland Healthy Soils Program to the list of programs that may receive funding from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative.

Significant research supports the approach of increasing soil organic matter and biodiversity to sequester greenhouse gases.¹ Investing revenues from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative into soil health programs will help farmers throughout the state increase yields, weather floods and droughts, and accelerate the net reduction of greenhouse gases beyond required regulatory reductions.

As written, HB 8 does not direct funding exclusively to soil health best practices directly linked to carbon sequestration. The proposed amendment helps ensure that the legislation's investment of limited financial resources through the Maryland Healthy Soils Program established in 2017 fulfills the purpose of Maryland's Strategic Energy Investment Fund while increasing the State's capacity to meet its climate change and resiliency goals.

CBF is a leader in soil health education and soil health technology transfer, enabling farmers to learn new techniques, collecting and interpreting data on agricultural management strategies for use by farmers and scientists, and providing outreach to consumers and farmers through Buy Fresh, Buy Local programs. CBF serves on Maryland Department of Agriculture's Soil Health Advisory Committee and is a founding partner of the Million Acre Challenge that seeks to achieve one million acres in healthy soils practices by 2030.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE with AMENDMENT report on HB 8.

Amendment No. 1

On Page 3 in Line 30, following "PROGRAM," insert "TO COMPENSATE FARMERS WHO MINIMIZE SOIL DISTURBANCE, MAXIMIZE PLANT DIVERSITY, AND STABILIZE SOIL BY MAINTAINING LIVING ROOTS YEAR-ROUND."

¹ Soil carbon sequestration potential of US croplands and grasslands: Implementing the 4 per Thousand Initiative; Adam Chambers, Rattan Lal, and Keith Paustian; doi:10.2489/jswc.71.3.68A, available at:
<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/050f/2ee0e638727c8652ac1ee23b470a71d577e.pdf>

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