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Date: January 12, 2021
To: Members of the Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee
From: Holly Porter, Executive Director
Re: SB 344 – Agriculture – Cost-Sharing Program – State Cost-Sharing Funds - **Support**

Delmarva Chicken Association (formerly Delmarva Poultry Industry, Inc.), the 1,600-member trade association representing the meat-chicken growers, processing companies and allied business members on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, the Eastern Shore of Virginia, and Delaware supports SB344 and urges a favorable committee report.

SB 344 allows the Maryland Department of Agriculture to increase the amount they are able to offer for cost-share projects from 87.5% to 100%. It also clarifies that matching funds may not be required.

The state of Maryland, through its Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plans, continues to look to agriculture to help with reducing the nitrogen, phosphorous and sediment loads to local waterways and the Chesapeake Bay. But many of the best management practices that are available can be costly to farmers, with no or little return on investment to the actual finances of the operation. Agriculture has faced a number of challenges throughout 2020, as have most citizens, and with weak commodity prices or markets still closed due to the pandemic, these challenges may be long-term.

Farmers are the first environmentalists and value the importance of preserving the land and water but need all the help they can get to continue a profitable operation to stay in business, allowing them to feed or clothe all of us, while utilizing best management practices. These additional funds would be a great incentive for farmers to add new practices to farms, while also helping the state to meet its Total Maximum Daily Load goals.

We urge a favorable vote on SB344.

Should you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact me at porter@dcachicken.com or 302-222-4069 or Nick Manis, Manis Canning & Associates, 410-263-7882.