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Date: January 26, 2021
To: Members of the House Health & Government Operations
From: Holly Porter, Executive Director
Re: HB 92 – Procurement – Invasive and Nonnative Plant Species – Prohibition on Use of State Funds – Support with Amendments

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 HB 92 with an amendment and asks for a favorable committee report.

HB 92 would prevent state funds to be used for purchasing invasive or nonnative plants unless a waiver was granted by the Board of Public Works.

DCA's suggested amendment would be to remove "nonnative plant species." The reason for this request is that one of the best management practices and good neighbor policies that our farmers practice is planting vegetative environmental buffers on chicken farms. Some of the best plants that are able to survive, especially outside of the ventilation fans, are miscanthus grass. While miscanthus is not invasive, it would be considered nonnative. Two other plants that are widely used are arborvitae and Nellie Stevens Holly trees. Tree plantings is an important part of not only creating windbreaks and decreasing emissions from leaving the farms, but they are also good for water quality. These practices are often cost-shared by the Maryland Agricultural Cost-Share program (MACS).

We also have several farmers that are planting miscanthus grass as an alternative bedding material for chicken houses. This woody biomass is a great alternative to sawdust shavings, and is a good crop for diversity on grain farms. Again, this product may have the potential to receive cost-share funds as more is learned about the nutrients it is uptaking.

For these reasons, we would like to support HB 92, but with the amendment of removing "nonnative plan species" from the text.

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.