



Senate Bill 538

Land Use - Agritourism - Definition

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
Committee

Date: March 9, 2022

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** SB 538. The bill expands the state definition of “agritourism” to include hosting agriculture-related special events and occasions and enables counties to adopt this model definition or their own standard based on local needs and conditions.

Agritourism is becoming a strong force for economic development in nearly all corners of Maryland. Recent advancements in the agricultural industry have led to new methods for generating revenue, while also preserving the core of what it means to be a farmer. Agritourism gives small farms—many of which have been in the same family for generations—a chance to increase revenue and potentially maintain the family business for generations ahead.

This bill strikes a balance between local autonomy and state policy. Counties would remain free to either opt into the State’s model definition or set their own standard.

SB 538 gives counties another tool in the toolbox while also preserving their ability to decide what definition of agritourism works best for their community. Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report for SB 538.