



Senate Bill 866
Special Vehicle Registration Plates - Chesapeake Bay Trust and Maryland
Agricultural Education Foundation – Appropriation

Date: March 7, 2023

Support As Amended

Submitted to: House Environment and Transportation Committee

Submitted by: Susanne Richards, Executive Director, Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation, Inc.

Summary

Maryland’s two colorful commemorative license plates, the “Ag Tag” and the “Bay Plate,” have benefitted Maryland for more than two decades by providing revenue to support the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation (MAEF) and the Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT). Revenues have remained stable for these organizations and their important work because *only two commemorative plates* have been available. In other states, when additional plates have been added, revenues for each plate have declined. SB866, with the amendment, would benchmark a minimum revenue level using general fund appropriations. *If there is no loss in revenue, no appropriations would be required.*

Background

The Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation was formed in 1989 at the recommendation of a Governor’s Task Force to support agricultural education and promote agricultural literacy. At the time, budget cuts had required elimination of positions and services in support of Agriculture Education at the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). A group of private citizens and the agricultural industry fostered the foundation through its early years.

Maryland’s “Ag Tag” debuted in 2001, and the revenues from the tag greatly increased MAEF’s ability to grow its services to Maryland education. In addition to the “Ag Tag” license plate revenues, MAEF is supported by private gifts, grants and program fees.

Over the ensuing decades, MAEF has picked up roles and responsibilities which had traditionally been part of MSDE’s Office of Agriculture Education, including professional development training for Agriculture Teachers, management of the Career Student Technical Organization, Maryland FFA, and day-to-day duties within the Environment, Agriculture and Natural Resources cluster.

In addition, MAEF operates a statewide Agricultural Literacy program, providing Mobile Science Lab programs to 50,000 elementary students annually and Mobile Agriculture Showcase exhibits to public events; offers professional development opportunities for all teachers to master using agriculture as a relevant context for teaching core subjects at any level; provides important connections, support and direction for Agriculture Education and Literacy programs statewide; offers two scholarship programs annually and provides grants for school and community gardens.

Upcoming changes to Maryland's educational system as a result of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future will greatly impact Agriculture Education. This pathway provides an important pipeline for individuals to prepare for careers in Maryland's largest commercial industry, which is responsible for 350,000 jobs and more than \$8.25 billion to Maryland's economy annually, generating more than \$755.2 million in state and local taxes. Please support SB866 as amended.