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FOR INFORMATION

Submitted to: Environment and Transportation Committee
Submitted by: Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation, Inc.

Agriculture is the state's largest commercial industry, part of a resource-based economy with an economic impact of \$20.2 billion each year, supporting more than 88,600 Maryland jobs and generating nearly \$755.2 million in state and local taxes. (BEACON, 2022)

Agribusiness is an economic powerhouse that fuels our rural communities and the state's economy. Although actual farmers make up less than 2 percent of the American population today, jobs in agribusiness abound. They include education; research; biotechnology; food and beverage production; environmental services; energy; crop protection; animal care; finance; marketing and communications; sales; national and international trade; management; food services and eating and drinking sites; textiles, apparel, and leather products; and forestry and fishing. (USDA ERS) These industries need workers who are familiar with agriculture and offer skills that can sustain our critically important industry through the generations to come.

The Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation (MAEF) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting agricultural education and agricultural literacy, which in turn supports the agricultural community in Maryland. MAEF was founded in 1989 after former Gov. William Donald Schaefer seated a task force to examine the status of agricultural education in Maryland, which determined that a private entity should be formed to advocate for ag ed in Maryland schools. The organization relied on gifts and grants to support its work until the Commemorative Agriculture License Plate was created in 2000.

Today, MAEF programs serve K-12 and post-secondary audiences, providing hands-on science instruction to 50,000 elementary students annually through our Mobile Labs, professional development for teachers at all levels, agricultural information to the public through our Mobile Showcases, support and administer Maryland FFA, provide coordination statewide for agricultural education, distribute grants for school and community gardens, award scholarships, support for Maryland agriculture teachers in secondary schools, and more.

Support from the license plate has provided baseline funding which allows the Foundation to maintain robust programming. Because only a certain number of drivers will register a commemorative plate, competition posed by additional tags could most certainly erode funding for MAEF's important programs. HB1257 (currently in Rules) would compensate MAEF and the Chesapeake Bay Trust (recipient of the Bay Plate proceeds) for losses in tag revenue.

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