



Susan O'Neill, Chair

Charlotte Davis, Executive Director

Testimony in Support as Amended of
Senate Bill 866 – Special Vehicle Registration Plates – Chesapeake Bay Trust and Maryland
Agricultural Education Foundation - Appropriation
Environment and Transportation Committee
Appropriations Committee
March 30, 2023

The Rural Maryland Council supports Senate Bill 866 – Special Vehicle Registration Plates – Chesapeake Bay Trust and Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation – Appropriation as amended. This bill requires the Governor to include in the annual budget bill for certain fiscal years an appropriation for the Chesapeake Bay Trust and Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation, Inc. that is calculated based on the amount of revenue collected from certain special vehicle registration plates in certain fiscal years; and, generally relating to the funding for the Chesapeake Bay Trust (the “Trust”) and the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation (MAEF).

The Trust’s mission is to engage and empower diverse groups to take actions that enrich natural resources and local communities of the Chesapeake Bay region. This is accomplished by annually awarding more than \$10 million in grant funding each year to hundreds of nonprofits and community organizations throughout the region for hands-on projects that are ensuring a cleaner, greener, healthier Chesapeake, Coastal Bays and Youghiogheny watershed for years to come. MAEF’s mission is to promote the importance of agriculture in everyone’s daily lives by increasing agricultural literacy and agricultural education. MAEF provides grants, scholarships, and/or science-based programming to approximately 50,000 elementary students per year; professional development for teachers; and important support for agricultural education at secondary and post-secondary levels.

For the past 23 years, both the Trust and MAEF have been supported by private revenues generated by commemorative vehicle license plates now ubiquitous and a source of pride in Maryland (the “bay plate” and the “ag tag”). With an increase in interest in additional plates being offered by other organizations, the revenue generated by the Trust and MAEF plates will decline. If revenue managed by the Trust or MAEF were to decline, grant funded projects related to their work will be directly affected. Senate Bill 866 will provide an annual appropriation for the Trust and MAEF to make these two organizations whole.

The Rural Maryland Council respectfully requests your favorable support of Senate Bill 866 as amended to ensure the revenues managed by MAEF and the Trust remain stable.

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) is an independent state agency governed by a nonpartisan, 40-member board that consists of inclusive representation from the federal, state, regional, county and municipal governments, as well as the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. We bring together federal, state, county and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to identify challenges unique to rural communities and to craft public policy, programmatic or regulatory solutions.