



Maryland Farm Bureau

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February 26, 2024

To: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

RE: **Opposition of SB653 - Standing - Environmental and Natural Resources Protection Proceedings**

On behalf of the member families of the Maryland Farm Bureau, I submit unfavorable testimony on SB653 Standing - Environmental and Natural Resources Protection Proceedings. The bill makes changes to State law to provide standing and certain remedies, to person and associations, with respect to claims arising under specified laws under the Environment and Natural Resources Articles. This bill would make changes to the current law including, standing, authorization of civil action, authorized relief, civil penalties, cost of litigation, and the authorization to intervene. Also, the bill's provisions supersede any inconsistent provision of any State, county, or municipal law, ordinance, or regulation and any judicial interpretation to the extent of the inconsistency.

Maryland Farmers are truly the first environmentalists, and care deeply about not only soil health, but also water health and the health of the Chesapeake Bay. Maryland farmers are currently some of the most regulated in the country, and consistently work to make sure they are in compliance with the law. While the bill aims to enforce environmental standards, the broad language authorizing courts to impose conditions on defendants might lead to overly punitive measures. The option for courts to order supplemental environmental projects raises questions about transparency and accountability in the allocation of funds. The bill's provision to supersede inconsistent local laws might create conflicts and legal uncertainties. A more collaborative approach, considering local perspectives and regulations, could lead to more effective and well-rounded environmental protection.

MDFB Policy: We urge changes to "standing law" so that no farmer who is in compliance with applicable law could be sued by a third party.

Maryland Farm Bureau Respectfully Opposes SB653

Tyler Hough
Director of Government Relations

Please contact Tyler Hough, (443) 878-4045 with any questions