



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

House Bill 234

Department of Agriculture – Licensing, Registration, Fees and Penalties, and Regulation

Date: February 7, 2024

To: Environment and Transportation Committee

Position: **Favorable**

From: Alan Girard

Eastern Shore Director

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** House Bill 234 which updates certain penalty and fee structures for agricultural use activities associated with horse establishments, beekeeping, nutrient management plans, and weights and measures. The legislation’s penalty provisions encourage greater compliance with State law while helping Maryland recover the cost of administering its registration and licensing programs at the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA).

In its Nutrient Management Program 2022 Annual Report, MDA states that fines were issued to 193 operators for late or missing Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs), and that the “the program is working to bring these farms into compliance.” The administrative penalty in HB 234 of not less than \$1,000 that a person would be subject to after 30 days’ notice provides a strong non-compliance disincentive. Annual Implementation Reports and nutrient management plan summaries statutorily required to be submitted to the Department supply critical information used by the State to evaluate and manage water quality concerns on farms.

HB 234 also updates certain license or registration procedures or penalties for horse establishments, beekeeping, and weights and measures. These procedures and penalties appropriately encourage program compliance while ensuring the fees charged are commensurate with burdens to the administrative agency and the public.

CBF urges the Committee’s FAVORABLE report on HB 234.

For more information, please contact Alan Girard, Eastern Shore Director, at agirard@cbf.org.

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 200,000 members and e-subscribers, including 71,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.