



Maryland Farm Bureau

3358 Davidsonville Road | Davidsonville, MD 21035
410-922-3426 | www.mdfarmbureau.com

February 14, 2025

To: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

RE: Opposition of SB898 - Nutrient Management – Tidal Buffer – Vegetative Buffers and Restriction on Fertilizer Application

On behalf of the nearly 8,000 member families of the Maryland Farm Bureau, I submit written testimony in opposition to SB898 Nutrient Management – Tidal Buffer – Vegetative Buffers and Restriction on Fertilizer Application. This proposed legislation includes provisions for the prohibition of nutrient application within the 100-foot tidal buffer.

The bill may appear to some as a measure that does not outright ban farming within the buffer zone; however, the prohibition of fertilizer application effectively eliminates the ability to farm within that area. Without access to fertilizers, the land will become unproductive, forcing farmers to abandon its use. This is a regulatory restriction disguised as an incentive program, leaving agricultural landowners with no real choice but to comply.

If the goal is to increase buffer establishment, then the approach should rely on voluntary participation rather than coercion. Farmers should be incentivized through enhanced Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) payments and cost-share programs, ensuring that buffer adoption is economically viable. Increasing financial incentives, including annual per-acre rental payments comparable to the income generated through crop production, would encourage voluntary compliance rather than mandating restrictions that threaten agricultural livelihoods.

In its current form, SB 898 forces compliance under the pretense of voluntary action. A truly farmer-friendly approach would remove the prohibition on nutrient application and instead focus on strengthening financial support for buffer implementation. By doing so, the bill could achieve its environmental goals without unfairly burdening Maryland's agricultural community. Maryland Farm Bureau respectfully opposes SB898 and requests an unfavorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tyler Hough', with a horizontal line above it.

Tyler Hough
Director of Government Relations

Please reach out to Tyler Hough, though@marylandfb.org, with any questions