



MARYLAND FFA ASSOCIATION, INC

P.O. Box #564
29 Frederick Road #564
Funkstown, MD 21734-0564
301-491-5686

February 10, 2025

The Honorable Senator Hester
304 James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Annapolis, MD 21401

Subject: Support for Maryland House Bill 650 and Senate Bill 563 – Maryland Agricultural Fair Board Funding

Dear Senator Hester,

On behalf of the Maryland State FFA Association, Maryland's premier agricultural organization for youth studying agricultural education, I am writing to express our strong support for House Bill 650 and Senate Bill 563. House Bill 650 and Senate Bill 563 which seeks to provide funding for the Maryland Agricultural Fair Board. These bills will designate much-needed financial support to the Maryland FFA Association, Maryland 4-H and other agricultural youth organizations as well as county fairs, and agricultural exhibitions. All of these organizations are vital to the preservation, promotion and education of our citizens with knowledge of our state's rich agricultural heritage.

The Maryland FFA serves over 2,400 high school students in 50 local school-based chapters within all of Maryland's 23 local education agencies. We provide programs to educate young adults about the importance of agriculture in their daily lives and assist them in developing their career and leadership skills leading to productive citizens and a strong Maryland workforce. These leadership programs include five regional and statewide conferences for students to develop effective communication skills, advocacy, teamwork and agricultural knowledge. The Maryland Agricultural Fair Board has long been a financial supporter of the Maryland FFA Association and dedicated itself to advancing agricultural education, supporting rural communities, and fostering youth engagement in agriculture and related industries. The funding provided by the Maryland Agricultural Fair Board provides hands-on opportunities for youth, ensures that fairs and agricultural events across the state can continue to offer educational programming, and showcases Maryland farmers and producers.

The Maryland FFA supports local agricultural fairs which serve as a crucial connection between rural and urban communities, providing a platform for consumers to learn about Maryland's diverse agricultural industry. They also contribute significantly to the state's economy by supporting local businesses, agritourism, and food producers. Increased funding will help local fairs expand their impact, enhance educational exhibits, provide a venue for FFA and 4-H members to showcase their entrepreneurial projects and maintain fairgrounds and infrastructure.

We urge you to support HB 650 and SB 563 to ensure that Maryland's agricultural fairs continue to thrive for generations to come. The Maryland FFA Association stands with you willing to assist in advocating for this important investment in our state's agricultural future. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Teresa T. Shank

Teresa T. Shank
Maryland FFA Executive Director
P.O. Box 564 Funkstown, MD 21734
301-491-5686