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Date: February 7, 2025
To: Members of the Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment
From: Grayson Middleton, Government Affairs Manager
Re: SB 428 – Chesapeake Bay Legacy Act – **Support**

Delmarva Chicken Association (DCA) the 1,600-member trade association representing the meat-chicken growers, companies, and allied business members on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, the Eastern Shore of Virginia, and Delaware supports SB 428 and urges a favorable committee report.

It is often said that Maryland’s farmers are some of the most environmentally conscious in the world, and rightly so. It is well known that since the 1970s, our farmers have faced some of the most stringent environmental legislation in the country. However environmental consciousness in Maryland agriculture is not just the result of government action. Countless farmers across the state have gone above and beyond what is required of them to improve the environment because in many cases these practices make for a healthier and more productive operation. In addition, they provide the obvious benefit of reducing negative environmental impacts on their farm, allowing them to continue passing down the land for generations.

Delmarva’s chicken farmers have been particularly aggressive in their environmental efforts. DCA administers and promotes a Vegetative Environmental Buffer Program (VEB) that provides cost share for planting trees and shrubs around the perimeter of chicken houses to reduce odor and dust and any potential nutrient emissions. Many farms have also made considerable investments in on-farm solar, which reduces electricity costs (the most expensive input for chicken farmers) and environmental impacts. Our “Littr” app helps connect chicken farmers to grain farmers who need nutrients in the form of chicken manure for their crops, ensuring this by-product is managed responsibly and goes to farms where it is needed.

Maryland’s grain farmers have also made many strides in their conservation efforts. Maryland’s grain and poultry industries are inextricably linked, with over 95% of grain grown on the Eastern Shore going to feed chickens. In 2023 alone, Maryland grain farmers removed an estimated 2.7 million pounds of nitrogen and 3,160 pounds of phosphorous through voluntary participation in Maryland’s cover crop program.

There is no doubt that regulations have been an impetus for many of the improvements we have seen in agricultural environmental impacts in Maryland. However, farmers have contributed immensely on their own accord to preserve the lands and ecosystems they call home. They are often referred to as “the first environmentalists” for that reason, and we believe it is time to give them the public recognition and incentive they deserve to continue their vital role. As such, we urge a favorable vote on SB 428.



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Should you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact me at middleton@dcahicken.com or 410-490-3329.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light blue background, reading 'Grayson S. Middleton'.

Grayson Middleton

Government Affairs Manager