

Good afternoon Education, Energy, and Environment Committee and Chair Feldman. It is my pleasure to be here today. My name is Jenell Eck McHenry, raised in Queen Anne's County on a chicken and grain farm. After graduating High School, I served this great state as Maryland's FFA State President and later as Miss Maryland Agriculture while studying at Chesapeake Community College, these two youth opportunities helped me find my place in the agriculture industry. Later I transferred to the University of Delaware and worked on a dual degree in general agriculture and natural resources as well as interpersonal communications. Since graduation I have worked in the agriculture industry supporting farmers and the work that they do.

Today my husband and I farm with our three year old in Kent County growing corn, soybeans, barley, wheat, and hay. We also have a beef operation where we calf out 50 cows each year and raise them to feed our community. As small beginning farmers, we have diversified our operation to include a commercial truck and custom farming business – where we combine for other farmers, mow, rake, and bale hay for others, and spread chicken litter for others. This diversification is needed in today's agriculture climate to allow the next generation to stay viable. In addition to diversification, we work closely with our agronomist to increase our nutrient use efficiency by lowering our nutrient inputs and taking advantage of products that claim to do so. We are always testing new products that perform well while saving money. In the last four years, we have utilized the Mid-Atlantic 4R's Cost-Share program to test split nitrogen application and biologicals. Both programs help provide crop nutrient needs when the crop best utilizes the nutrient. By passing the Chesapeake Bay Legacy Act and establishing the Leaders in Environmentally Engaged Farming Program, more opportunities and statewide connections could be made available.

Opportunities to interact with Maryland's leading growers, allowing farmers to interact and learn from each other on their nutrient successes. Opportunities to explore other incentives to be available when testing a new product or a reduction doesn't perform and bills are still due. Opportunities to be recognized and challenged to work through each tier. Opportunities to grow our leadership skills through a number of agriculture organizations.

Maryland farmers are truly at the forefront of conservation in the United States. We will continue to be looked at as leaders and must continue to explore new opportunities to reduce crop inputs and grow bountiful crops. Together Maryland farmers will continue to do just that.