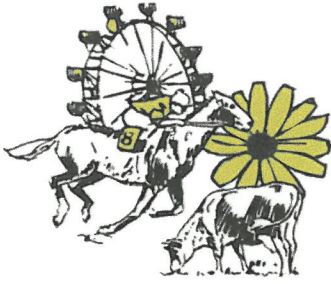


# **SB 563 Favorable Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: David Gordon

Position: FAV



# MARYLAND STATE FAIR

P.O. BOX 188, TIMONIUM, MARYLAND 21094-0188 410-252-0200 FAX 410-561-5610

D. Andrew Cashman  
General Manager  
Maryland State Fair  
2200 York Road  
Timonium, MD 21093  
acashman@marylandstatefair.com  
410-252-0200

February 14, 2025

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman  
Chair, Education, Energy & Environment  
Maryland General Assembly  
2 West Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: Support for SB 563 – Maryland Fair and Agricultural Education Promise Fund -  
Establishment (Maryland Fair and Agricultural Education Promise Act)

Dear Chairperson Feldman and Members of the Committee,

I write to you today on behalf of the Maryland State Fair in support of SB563, legislation that will provide a stable and permanent funding source for the Maryland State Fair and other agricultural fairs and shows across the state that desperately need this funding. This bill is essential to maintaining and strengthening the agricultural heritage, education, and community engagement that these events provide.

Historically, the Maryland State Fair has received funding annually from the special fund, a sum tied to the 42 racing days we transferred to the state after discontinuing our summer horse race meet. Additionally, we, as well as many other fairs and shows, receive funding annually through the Maryland Agriculture Fair Board to support ribbons, awards, and other critical programming. These funds are vital to ensuring the success of our fair and the many other fairs and agricultural and community events across Maryland.

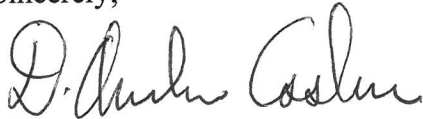
The special fund, primarily financed through unclaimed pari-mutuel tickets from horse racing, has become an increasingly unstable revenue source due to the decline in racing and wagering. Each year, we experience significant reductions in funding, creating uncertainty and making it difficult to budget for the programs and opportunities we offer. SB563 will provide a much-needed solution by reinforcing the intended financial commitments in the original statute and

ensuring a predictable funding stream for Maryland State Fair and the numerous other Maryland fairs and shows.

Agricultural fairs, including the Maryland State Fair, serve as vital educational and economic drivers in our communities. They offer hands-on learning experiences for youth, promote local agriculture, and provide a platform for small businesses, vendors, and entertainers. Without consistent funding, these contributions to our communities are at risk. By passing SB563, the General Assembly will help sustain these time-honored traditions and provide much-needed financial stability.

I respectfully urge the committee to give SB563 a favorable report to safeguard the future of the Maryland State Fair and the many other fairs and shows that enrich our state. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Andrew Cashman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "D." and last name "Cashman" clearly distinguishable.

D. Andrew Cashman  
General Manager  
Maryland State Fair

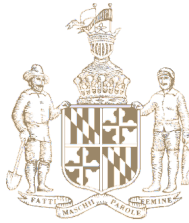
# **Sen Hester\_SB563 Testimony (1).pdf**

Uploaded by: Katie Fry Hester

Position: FAV

**KATIE FRY HESTER**  
*Legislative District 9*  
Howard and Montgomery Counties

Education, Energy, and  
Environment Committee



*Annapolis Office*  
James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 304  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3671 • 301-858-3671  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3671  
KatieFry.Hester@senate.state.md.us

Chair, Joint Committee on  
Cybersecurity, Information Technology  
and Biotechnology

**THE SENATE OF MARYLAND**  
**ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401**

**Testimony in Support of SB563 - Maryland Fair and Agricultural Education Promise Fund  
- Establishment (Maryland Fair and Agricultural Education Promise Act)**

February 18, 2025

Chair Feldman, Vice-Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

Thank you for your consideration of SB563, which provides a stable source of funding intended for agricultural education, county fairs, and the Maryland State Fair. It would establish the Maryland Fair and Agricultural Education Promise Fund as a special fund, transferring funding obligations from the Racing Revenues Special Fund.

Agricultural education programs and county fairs are not only a cherished part of Maryland's culture but also an important driver of our state's economy. County fairs and the Maryland State Fair serve as economic engines that provide critical support to Maryland's rural communities, local businesses, and agritourism. These fairs generate revenue, create jobs, and foster a deeper public appreciation for Maryland's agricultural heritage. Recognizing this, the state committed \$1.45 million annually from the Racing Revenues Special Fund, supported by uncashed pari-mutuel betting slips, to fund these programs. However, as revenue from this fund has steadily declined, the future of these programs is at risk.

Currently, agricultural education programs, county fairs, and the Maryland State Fair are slated to receive this funding, but the shift to digital sports betting and a decline in racing days have led to a steady drop in revenue. In FY2022, the fund generated just \$574,000—falling nearly \$900,000 short of the intended allocation. These shortfalls cause significant disruptions to the fairs and the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation. Over the last six years, the Maryland Agricultural Fair Board has had to defer nearly \$4 million in grant requests needed for county fairs' continued operation.

Creating the Maryland Fair and Agricultural Education Promise Fund would establish a stable and reliable funding source under the umbrella of the Maryland State Lottery Fund, so that agricultural education will receive the full promised grants. Specifically, this bill will:

- Direct \$1.45 million in funding to a new special fund under the State Lottery Fund instead of the Racing Revenues Special Fund, providing:
  - \$825,000 to the Maryland Agricultural Fair Board,
  - \$75,000 to the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation, and
  - \$550,000 to the Maryland State Fair and Agricultural Society
- Repeal the required equivalent funding from the Racing Revenues Special Fund

This funding provided by this bill will support MAEF, 4-H, FFA and other agricultural programs that are immensely important for education. These programs build character and teach critical thinking skills for young people who don't end up in agriculture. There are no new fees or taxes associated with this bill, as the \$1.45 million appropriation is simply being moved from one special fund to another. With a secure source of funding, we can provide critical support for agricultural education and safeguard the future of the agricultural industry.

**For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on SB563.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Katie Fry Hester". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Senator Katie Fry Hester  
Howard and Montgomery Counties

# **SB563\_RMC\_SupportTestimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Molli Cole

Position: FAV



50 Harry S. Truman Parkway • Annapolis, MD 21401  
Office: 410-841-5772 • Voice: 410-841-5761 • TTY: 800-735-2258  
Email: [rmc.mda@maryland.gov](mailto:rmc.mda@maryland.gov)  
Website: [www.rural.maryland.go](http://www.rural.maryland.go)

*Susan O'Neill, Chair*

*Charlotte Davis, Executive Director*

Testimony in Support of  
Senate Bill 563 – Maryland Fair and Agricultural Education Promise Fund - Establishment  
(Maryland Fair and Agricultural Education Promise Act)  
Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee  
February 18, 2025

**The Rural Maryland Council supports Senate Bill 563 – Maryland Fair and Agricultural Education Promise Fund - Establishment (Maryland Fair and Agricultural Education Promise Act).** This bill establishes the Maryland Fair and Agricultural Education Promise Fund as a special, non-lapsing fund aimed at advancing agricultural fairs and education in the state. It requires that any interest earnings from the fund be credited back to it. Additionally, the bill allocates \$1,450,000 from the state lottery proceeds—before any funds are directed to the General Fund—to the Promise Fund. Lastly, it repeals the previous requirement that a specific amount of annual proceeds from the state horse racing special fund be used to promote agricultural fairs and education in the state.

Maryland's agricultural education and agricultural fairs play a vital role in the state's economy and community engagement.

Agricultural education in Maryland provides essential knowledge and skills to students and individuals interested in pursuing careers in agriculture, environmental science, and related fields. By teaching sustainable farming practices, animal husbandry, and the basics of agribusiness, these educational programs help cultivate the next generation of agricultural leaders. This education not only supports local farming communities but also ensures the continuation of agricultural traditions and innovations that are critical for food security and economic stability in Maryland.

Maryland agricultural fairs are also important for several reasons. These fairs serve as a platform to showcase local produce, livestock, and agricultural products, allowing farmers to connect directly with consumers. This strengthens the local economy by promoting the sale of Maryland-grown food and crafts. Additionally, fairs create a sense of community, bringing people together to celebrate the state's agricultural heritage through events like livestock shows, exhibits, and competitions.

Moreover, agricultural fairs often include educational components, such as workshops and demonstrations that inform participants about agriculture, sustainability, and food systems. These events foster an appreciation for farming and the challenges that farmers face, bridging the gap between urban and rural communities.

The Rural Maryland Council respectfully requests your favorable support of Senate Bill 563.

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) is an independent state agency governed by a nonpartisan, 40-member board that consists of inclusive representation from the federal, state, regional, county, and municipal governments, as well as the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. We bring together federal, state, county, and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to identify challenges unique to rural communities and to craft public policy, programmatic, or regulatory solutions.

*“A Collective Voice for Rural Maryland”*



## **Letter for support Senate Bill 563-Maryland Fair a**

Uploaded by: Richard Stonebraker

Position: FAV



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February 14, 2025

Subject: Support for Senate Bill 563-Maryland Fair and Agricultural Education Promise Fund

On behalf of the Maryland State Grange, Maryland's oldest agricultural organization, I am writing to express our strong support for Senate Bill 563, which seeks to increase funding for the Maryland Agricultural Fair Board. This bill will provide much-needed support to county fairs, community shows, agricultural exhibitions, and youth programs that are vital to the preservation and promotion of our state's rich agricultural heritage.

The Maryland State Grange has long been dedicated 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 ensures that fairs and agricultural events across the state can continue to offer educational programming, showcase local farmers and producers, and provide hands-on opportunities for youth involved in organizations such as 4-H and FFA.

Agricultural fairs 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 these fairs expand their impact, enhance educational exhibits, and maintain fairgrounds and infrastructure.

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

Sincerely,

Richard Stonebraker  
President  
Maryland State Grange

# **MAEF - Senate Bill 563.pdf**

Uploaded by: Susanne Richards

Position: FAV



**Senate Bill 563**  
**Maryland Fair and Agricultural Education Promise Fund**

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**Date: February 14, 2025**

**Favorable**

Submitted to: House Environment and Transportation Committee

Submitted by: Susanne Richards, Executive Director, Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation, Inc.

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Thank you for the opportunity to testify in favor of SB0563. My name is Susanne Richards and I am the Executive Director of the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation.

MAEF is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting agricultural education and agricultural literacy, which in turn benefits the agricultural community in Maryland.

MAEF programs serve K-12 and post-secondary audiences, providing:

- hands-on science instruction to 50,000 elementary students annually through our Mobile Science Labs,
- professional development for teachers at all grade levels,
- agricultural information to the public through our Mobile Showcases,
- support and administration of Maryland FFA for career and leadership development of our agriculture students,
- grants for school and community gardens,
- scholarships,
- support for Maryland agriculture teachers in secondary schools, and more.

Our programs benefit more than 150,000 people directly each year.

For many years, MAEF had been able to count on \$75,000 in funding through the Special Fund statute, using it to supplement revenues from the Ag Tag license plate

to support programming. As the use of digital gambling technology increased, the funding decreased and our ability to support programming has been impacted.

In addition, our local fairs and shows have benefitted from the Special Fund. More than a million Marylanders compete in and visit our fairs and community shows each year, which provide important **nonformal** education to our communities and economic boosts to local economies.

While the number of people actively engaged in farming is relatively small, it is now growing, thanks to renewed interest and an increasing number of smaller urban and suburban farms. Whether farm or “farmette,” there is a shared need for educational resources

- to support these businesses,
- to ensure a thriving and safe local food supply,
- to and effectively steward our rural land, water and air.

Agriculture is the state’s largest commercial industry, part of a resource-based economy with an economic impact of \$20.2 billion each year, supporting more than 88,600 Maryland jobs and generating nearly \$755.2 million in state and local businesses. It is an economic powerhouse that fuels our rural communities and the state’s economy.

It is an industry that represents the very foundation this state since its beginning and continues to sustain it generations later.

We urge your favorable vote for SB563. Thank you.

**Susanne Richards**

Executive Director

**Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation**

[susanne@maefonline.com](mailto:susanne@maefonline.com)

Cell: (410) 430-2613



# **Support for Senate Bill 563.pdf**

Uploaded by: Teresa Shank

Position: FAV



**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

# **MDFB - Support - SB563 Maryland Fair and Agricultu**

Uploaded by: Tyler Hough

Position: FAV





## Maryland Farm Bureau

3358 Davidsonville Road | Davidsonville, MD 21035

410-922-3426 | [www.mdfarmbureau.com](http://www.mdfarmbureau.com)

February 14, 2025

**To:** Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

**From:** Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

**RE: Support of SB563 - Maryland Fair and Agricultural Education Promise Fund - Establishment  
(Maryland Fair and Agricultural Education Promise Act)**

On behalf of the nearly 8,000 member families of the Maryland Farm Bureau, I submit written testimony in favor of SB563 Maryland Fair and Agricultural Education Promise Fund - Establishment (Maryland Fair and Agricultural Education Promise Act). This legislation would establish the Maryland Fair and Agricultural Education Promise Fund as a special, non-lapsing fund to advance agricultural fairs and education in the State.

Agricultural education plays a crucial role in shaping the next generation of leaders, farmers, and informed consumers. Programs such as 4-H, FFA, and agricultural education in schools provide hands-on learning experiences that connect students to the agricultural industry while also teaching them valuable life skills. Through participation in these programs, young people develop leadership abilities, teamwork, problem-solving skills, and strong work ethic—qualities that benefit them regardless of their career paths. Additionally, agricultural education fosters a deeper appreciation for the role of farming in our economy, food supply, and environmental sustainability, helping to build a well-informed citizenry that supports and understands agriculture's significance.

Currently, the Maryland Agricultural Fair Board, the Maryland State Fair, and the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation depend on funding from a non-lapsing special fund, which has traditionally been sustained by unclaimed racing mutuals. These funds have been instrumental in supporting agricultural fairs, youth programs, and hands-on educational experiences that inspire and educate the next generation. However, with the rapid expansion of online gambling, the revenue generated from unclaimed racing mutuals has dwindled, resulting in a significant shortfall in available funding. Consequently, many programs that rely on these funds to operate effectively have seen reductions in resources, limiting their ability to provide opportunities for students and communities.

Ensuring the continued success of agricultural education programs is essential not only for the students who directly benefit but also for the broader agricultural industry and local economies. These programs contribute to workforce development, fostering a pipeline of skilled individuals who will drive innovation and sustainability in agriculture. Without adequate funding, access to agricultural education and hands-on learning experiences will decline, potentially leading to long-term consequences for industry and rural communities. To maintain and expand these critical programs, alternative funding solutions must be explored, and policymakers must prioritize investment in agricultural education. Supporting these initiatives is

not just about preserving tradition, it is about securing a strong future for Maryland's agricultural sector and ensuring that young people have the knowledge and skills to succeed in an ever-changing world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyler Hough", is positioned below a horizontal line.

Tyler Hough  
Director of Government Relations

Please reach out to Tyler Hough, [though@marylandfb.org](mailto:though@marylandfb.org), with any questions