



March 4, 2025

The Honorable Marc Korman, Chair  
House Environment and Transportation Committee

**Re: House Bill 506 – Chesapeake Bay Legacy Act**

Position: **Support**

Chair Korman & Committee Members:

On behalf of the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts (MASCD) I am writing to express our **support** for House Bill 506 – Chesapeake Bay Legacy Act. MASCD, incorporated in 1956, promotes practical and effective soil, water, and natural resource related programs to all Marylanders. Through individual conservation districts MASCD provides leadership, education, cooperation, and local direction, on a voluntary basis. MASCD contains thousands of success stories ranging from innovative conservation techniques to waterway management. Conservation districts are locally led to address soil and water issues at the district level while also connecting their farmers and residents to resources at the state and federal level. Our shared success is the result of a network of partners established through a fair and just process in which the agricultural communities throughout the State are appointed and serve the common goal of their communities. A unified future for agriculture in the State of Maryland has proven to be effective when we can work together.

This bill would establish the Maryland Leaders in Environmentally Engaged Farming (LEEF) Program to reduce nutrient runoff into the watersheds of the Chesapeake Bay and incentivize the adoption of best practices for nutrient and sediment reduction. Agricultural best practices such as cover crop plantings play a significant role in staving off millions of pounds of nitrogen that threaten to enter our watersheds each year. The Association supports any measure that incentivizes the voluntary adoption of best practices for nutrient management and water quality. Furthermore, we maintain that the cost of funding a program such as LEEF is significantly less than the cost of mitigating damages attributable to poor or negligent land management.

We appreciate this important legislation that addresses financial barriers to farmers implementing best practices for nutrient management and sediment reduction. By incentivizing behaviors that have a positive impact on our ecosystems and natural resources, this proposal, in addition to initiatives such as Cover Crop Funding and the Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share, maximizes the benefits to our environment and reduces the significant cost to the state associated with repairing damages from problems caused by soil, water, air, and other forms of pollution.

I respectfully request a **favorable** report of House Bill 506

Respectfully Submitted,

Jen Nelson, Executive Director  
Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts