

Testimony in support of HB1175 – Nutrient Management – Tidal Buffer- Vegetative Buffers
and Restrictions on Fertilizer Application

House Environment and Transportation Committee Hearing:

Feb. 28, 1:00pm

Chair Korman and respected committee members,

I'm Marian Fry and my farm family lives in the Chester River Watershed on Maryland's Eastern Shore. We adamantly support agriculture as a critical industry in assuring that our region has a plentiful food and feed supply. Experience has shown that the use of a variety of Best Management Practices enhances production and decreases ag pollution. We are challenged to continue finding new strategies that support clean water while maintaining viable agriculture. I support HB1175 for the following reasons: This bill is an example of the effort to target programs that will have the maximum benefit in cleaning Chesapeake Bay waters. It seeks to prevent water pollution from agricultural fertilizer use that would otherwise be permitted 100 feet from Maryland tidal water, increase land voluntarily enrolled in conservation to further increase nutrient reductions, and create the state's first incentive program that provides value to tenant farmers – the growing future for on-farm conservation.

With 40 years of effort to clean the waters of the Bay, and an additional 4 million people in the Chesapeake watershed over that time, the goals of the Bay Agreement haven't been met. Innovative policies and implementation practices are needed to breach this restoration gap. This bill is a direct response to the CESR Report, UMD Cooperative Extension's *Riparian Buffer Management Fact Sheet*, and the Harry Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology's *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Economic Incentives to Enhance Riparian Buffer Adoption and Environmental Benefits for Water Quality and Carbon Sequestration*, which all cite riparian buffer adoption as one of the most cost efficient practices to maximize pollution reductions. Given budget constraints, Maryland's incentive programs must be strategically tailored to maximize results while pairing incentives with creative policies to increase participation. HB1175 addresses these recommendations by:

1. Increasing the nutrient application setback on **farms bordering tidal waters** to 100 feet to reduce nutrient pollution- this is **already a requirement for Animal Feeding Operations through MDE**;
2. Increasing incentives for voluntary land enrollment in forest and grass buffers within the 100 foot setbacks;
3. Establish incentives for leased land operators who farm land enrolled in conservation within the 100 foot buffer to offset production losses.

This bill will impact less than half of one percent of Maryland's farmland but targets the areas that hold the potential for significant positive benefit to the Chesapeake Bay. I recommend a favorable report on HB1175.

