

February 26, 2025

To: Environment and Transportation Committee

From: Marshal Cahall – Chesterville Bridge Farm, LLC

RE: Opposition of HB1175 / SB0898 – Nutrient Management – Tidal Buffers – Vegetative Buffers and Restriction on Fertilizer Application

As a 35-year-old third-generation farmer in Maryland operating a diverse agricultural business cultivating over 2,300 acres of land, utilizing both convention and organic production systems, I submit written testimony in opposition of HB1175 / SB0898 – Nutrient Management – Tidal Buffers – Vegetative Buffers and Restriction on Fertilizer Application. This legislation would unjustly restrict a farmer's ability to cultivate valuable land they own or lease without providing a dedicated funding source to compensate them for the loss of income.

Farmers in Maryland are leading the country in conservation practices that enhance crop production, reduce nutrient inputs, enhance nutrient use efficiency, and reduce environmental impacts. Advanced soil testing and variable rate nutrient applications, coupled with a robust adoption of cover crops, ensure that the right source of nutrients is applied at the right rate, and at the right time, in the right place to maximize efficiency and reduce the environmental impact of agriculture. These practices, which have largely been adopted voluntarily, have created a cleaner environment and farmers are continually improving their conservation efforts.

Restrictions on fertilizer applications will take farm acres out of production, and while an additional 75-feet may not seem like much, every acre counts to the farmers depending on the income from those acres. Farmers in Maryland lose access to land every year for many reasons and the cumulative impact of lost acres and income has negative impacts on the financial outlook of the industry as whole. It is unacceptable to mandate that farmers continue to bear the financial responsibility of meeting these goals alone and a fertilizer restriction without a dedicated funding source to establish buffers will provide additional harm to Maryland farmers already facing the financial challenges of declining farm income.

While I support the effort to expand clean and restore the Chesapeake Bay by the State of Maryland, it cannot continue to be at the expense of rural communities, farmers, and Maryland's Agricultural Industry. I respectfully oppose HB1175 / SB0898 and urge an unfavorable report by the Committee.

Sincerely,



Marshal Cahall

Chesterville Bridge Farm, LLC