



Maryland Farm Bureau

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March 6, 2025

To: House Environment and Transportation Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

RE: Support of HB503 Chesapeake Bay Legacy Act

On behalf of the nearly 8,000 members of the Maryland Farm Bureau, I submit written testimony in favor of HB503 Chesapeake Bay Legacy Act. This legislation would establish the Maryland Leaders in Environmentally Engaged Farming (LEEF) Program, alter the definition of "healthy soils" for purposes of the Maryland Healthy Soils Program, and more.

For decades, the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) has provided financial assistance through cost-sharing programs aimed at improving conservation practices to meet essential water quality goals. Maryland farmers have not only met these demands but have also emerged as national leaders in areas such as conservation tillage management. Their commitment to sustainable practices has significantly contributed to the preservation of our environment while maintaining agricultural productivity in an environmentally sensitive region.

As we look beyond 2025 and consider the future of watershed strategies, it is imperative to continue recognizing and incentivizing the remarkable work being done by farmers in conservation and community engagement. This program aims to highlight, and reward applied conservation practices, green space preservation, on-farm research participation, and contributions to equitable and resilient food systems. By providing well-deserved recognition to farmers for their environmental stewardship, we can strengthen connections between the agricultural community, conservation partners, research institutions, and the broader public.

One of the most commendable aspects of this program is its inclusiveness. All farm operations, regardless of size or type, will be eligible to participate. This ensures that every farmer is acknowledged as an integral part of the solution as we collectively strive toward achieving environmental and sustainability goals while maintaining our commitment to feeding our communities. The program meets farmers where they are by recognizing their current conservation efforts and encouraging further engagement in areas where growth opportunities exist.

Maryland Farm Bureau Supports HB503

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tyler Hough", is positioned below a horizontal line that extends across the width of the signature.

Tyler Hough

Director of Government Relations

Please reach out to Tyler Hough, though@marylandfb.org, with any questions