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Date: February 5, 2025  
To: Members of the Senate Committee on Education, Energy, and the Environment  
From: Grayson Middleton, Government Affairs Manager  
Re: HB 262 – Maryland Agriculture Commission and Young Farmers – **Support**

Delmarva Chicken Association (DCA) the 1,600-member trade association representing the meat-chicken growers, companies, and allied business members on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, the Eastern Shore of Virginia, and Delaware supports HB 262 and urges a favorable committee report.

HB 262 would alter the membership of the Maryland Agricultural Commission by eliminating redundant industry representation and adding seats for a new and beginning farmer, a veteran farmer, an urban/small farmer, and a socially disadvantaged farmer, among others. The bill would also establish a Committee on Young Farmers.

The Maryland Agricultural Commission provides invaluable collaboration between different sectors of agriculture and the Maryland Department of Agriculture. By eliminating the duplicative seats on the commission, we hope that the Commission will foster closer collaboration, while also including voices that have unfortunately been absent in the development of agricultural policy.

The additional seats are also apt to directly benefit our chicken community. About 23% of chicken farmers are from minority groups, compared with 4.5% of farmers nationally. In addition, chicken farming is one of the most accessible enterprises for new and beginning farmers, owing to the relatively minimal land and equipment requirements. Therefore, we believe the additional representation of underserved and new and beginning farmers will also represent the interests of many of our members.

The new composition of the Commission will be more reflective of the citizenry of Maryland and the future of our industry, fostering more productive and meaningful collaboration across sectors. As such, we urge a favorable vote on HB 262.

Should you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact me at [middleton@dcahicken.com](mailto:middleton@dcahicken.com) or 410-490-3329.

Sincerely,

Grayson Middleton

Government Affairs Manager