



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

House Bill 278

Income Tax – Subtraction Modification -Enhanced Agricultural Management Equipment

Date: January 23, 2025

To: House Ways & Means Committee

Position: **Favorable with Amendments**

From: Rob Schnabel,
Maryland Restoration Scientist

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS HB 278 WITH AMENDMENTS**, asking to modify the title to "Soil Health" Management Equipment and have the **scope of the equipment purchased to be solely for soil health management practices**. There has been a significant increase in farmers wanting to adopt more regenerative agriculture practices which require specialized equipment. Maryland County Soil Conservation Districts (SCD's) and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) have been hosting winter meetings and on-farm demonstrations to showcase practices that improve soil health.

Two recent events in the Hagerstown area showcased "planting green", where cover crops are rolled by roller crimpers while row crops are planted at the same time within clover. This is done with one pass of the tractor instead of two reducing fossil fuel consumption and protects the soil from erosion and reducing the need for herbicide and fertilizer. Another event showcased aerial overseeding of cover crops into an existing stand of soybeans using a drone. This allows for the cover crop vegetation to get established prior to soybean harvest, maintaining a growing root while providing cover to reduce erosion and facilitate nutrient cycling, which reduces fertilizer needs. This also greatly reduces fossil fuel consumption as drone are battery operation and can plan aurally much faster than with a tractor.

Roller crimpers and drones are examples of soil health management equipment to assist farmers as they incorporate regenerative agriculture practices to reduce input costs while improving water quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions for their communities and the State.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on HB 278 with amendment to specify that equipment eligible for the subtraction modification must be consistent with implementing soil health management practices.

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at mstegman@cbf.org.

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The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 200,000 members and e-subscribers, including 71,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.