



Maryland Farm Bureau

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March 3, 2026

To: Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

RE: Opposition to SB781 – CHERISH Our Communities Act

On behalf of the over 7,000 member families of the Maryland Farm Bureau, I submit written testimony in respectful opposition to SB781 – CHERISH Our Communities Act as written.

While Maryland Farm Bureau strongly supports the principles of environmental justice and responsible stewardship, values reflected throughout our policy priorities, we are deeply concerned about the bill's application to agricultural operations, particularly the inclusion of Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) general discharge permits.

As committee members are aware, Maryland's CAFO general permit expired in July 2025, and the failure to renew the permit has resulted in significant disruptions across the agricultural economy. The impacts have extended far beyond poultry growers, affecting grain and livestock farms, agricultural construction and building contractors, feed and equipment suppliers and financial institutions supporting farm businesses.

Current conservative estimates indicate that more than \$35 million in agricultural construction and expansion projects remain stalled. This figure does not capture the additional lost on-farm income, delayed real estate transactions, reduced equipment and feed sales, and diminished state and local revenue, losses that may never be fully quantified.

Because any substantial revisions to the permit must be approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, adding new statutory requirements at this stage risks extending the permitting delay even further. The agricultural community cannot withstand additional months—or years—of uncertainty. The economic strain already felt across rural Maryland is severe, and further delay would only deepen the harm.

Maryland Farm Bureau appreciates the ongoing dialogue with the bill sponsors and advocates, and we remain committed to working collaboratively on a path forward. We believe it is possible to address stakeholder concerns without exacerbating the already critical situation surrounding the CAFO general permit renewal.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tyler Hough', with a horizontal line above it.

Tyler Hough
Director of Government Relations

Please contact Tyler Hough, though@marylandfb.org, with any questions