



Maryland Farm Bureau

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March 3, 2026

To: Senate Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

RE: **Support of SB861 Environment - Stormwater Management - Agricultural Land**

On behalf of the over 7,000 member families of the Maryland Farm Bureau, I submit this written testimony in support of SB861 Environment - Stormwater Management - Agricultural Land. This legislation takes an important step in improving stormwater management across Maryland by recognizing the unique characteristics of agricultural land and ensuring that local enforcement efforts reflect both environmental goals and agricultural realities. SB 861 strengthens Maryland's approach by requiring the Department of the Environment to develop regulations and a model ordinance that guide local stormwater management programs in enforcing stormwater requirements on agricultural land with the advice and consent of local Soil Conservation Districts. This approach both respects and formalizes the critical role that Soil Conservation Districts already play in advising farmers and partnering with state and local agencies on conservation practices. Their involvement will ensure that stormwater requirements applied to agricultural land are grounded in practical, science-based conservation methods that align with long-standing agricultural best management practices.

A particularly important component of SB 861 is its requirement that the Maryland Stormwater Design Manual be updated to clearly define agriculture, and agricultural accessory uses as distinct from commercial development. Agriculture is fundamentally different from commercial and industrial development in land use, purpose, and impact. Ensuring that these distinctions are formally recognized in state guidance helps avoid misapplication of standards that were never designed for agricultural settings. The bill also directs the Department of the Environment to incorporate flexibility into how stormwater regulations are enforced on agricultural land. This flexibility is vital to maintaining operational viability for farms and reflects the reality that agriculture already operates within a comprehensive system of conservation practices—including nutrient management planning, soil conservation strategies, and land stewardship programs—that deliver measurable environmental benefits.

Senate Bill 861 does not impose new fees or punitive measures on agricultural producers, nor does it require local governments to treat farms as commercial stormwater generators. Instead, it ensures that stormwater enforcement is coordinated, science-based, and appropriately tailored. By directing the state to develop clear guidance, consistent definitions, and a model ordinance, the bill promotes uniformity across local jurisdictions while protecting agricultural operations from the inconsistent or overly burdensome application of stormwater rules. At the same time, the bill reaffirms the importance of farmer-agency partnerships in meeting



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environmental goals, recognizes the central role of Soil Conservation Districts, and provides local governments with the clarity and tools they need to carry out enforcement effectively.

For these reasons, Senate Bill 861 represents a balanced and thoughtful approach that strengthens environmental stewardship without undermining the economic viability of Maryland agriculture. It reinforces the state's commitment to clean water while preserving flexibility, clarity, and fairness for the agricultural community. I respectfully urge the Committee to give SB 861 a favorable report

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tyler Hough'. The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned below a horizontal line.

Tyler Hough

Director of Government Relations

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