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Maryland Department of Agriculture

Legislative Comment

Date: March 3rd, 2026

BILL NUMBER: Senate Bill 861
BILL TITLE: Environment - Stormwater Management - Agricultural Land
MDA POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) respectfully submits this letter in support of *Senate Bill 861 - Environment - Stormwater Management - Agricultural Land*, with amendments.

Senate Bill 861 is the successful result of a deliberate and technical collaboration between the bill sponsors, the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) and the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to ensure clarity for permit applicants and local permitting authorities when implementing stormwater management requirements in agricultural areas. MDA worked on amendments with both MDE and the bill sponsor. As amended, the bill will require MDE, in consultation with MDA, to develop a definition for agritourism for stormwater management purposes. The bill will also require MDE to consider best management practices for stormwater management, including creating a “standard plan” template that can be used for temporary parking areas, and consider the use of pastureland, meadow areas, and cropland for the treatment of stormwater runoff in forthcoming regulations. Finally, the bill ensures that best practices in coordination between soil conservation districts and local permitting authorities are consistently applied across jurisdictions.

The bill maintains Maryland’s high water quality standards while providing farmers with the regulatory certainty necessary to thrive and continue their essential conservation work. By codifying these collaborative standards, this bill provides Maryland’s farmers with the regulatory certainty they need to invest in their operations while continuing to lead the nation in conservation. For these reasons, MDA supports Senate Bill 861 and respectfully requests the consideration of the amendments as provided.

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