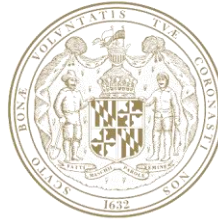


JEFFERSON L. GHRIST
Co-CHAIR

NATALIE ZIEGLER
Co-CHAIR



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
HOUSE RURAL CAUCUS

March 11, 2026

The Honorable Marc Korman
Chair, Environment & Transportation Committee
251 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Chair Korman and Honorable Members of the Environment & Transportation Committee:

On behalf of the Rural Caucus, we are writing to request alterations to **HB 1268 – The CHERISH Our Communities Act**.

As you know, rural communities rely heavily on a healthy environment to support our livelihoods, natural resources, and quality of life. As such, we appreciate this legislation's intent to regulate and reduce pollution. However, including Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) is duplicative, unnecessary, and may bring unintended consequences to our rural areas.

CAFOs are non-discharge facilities which are already subjected to a rigorous public permitting process that is accompanied by aggressive oversight and strict zoning regulations. Subjecting CAFOs to additional permitting is duplicative and adds an additional layer of regulatory obstacles to an already overburdened industry. Furthermore, a large portion of the Eastern Shore would fall under the "At-Risk Census Tract" due to proximity to existing CAFOs, which could potentially hinder economic development by slowing or blocking other large projects under consideration in these rural communities.

To address these concerns, the Rural Caucus will share an amendment with the committee to strike CAFOs from the "Covered General Permit" and "At-Risk Census Tract" requirements of the legislation.

With these aforementioned changes, the Rural Caucus supports HB 1286 and requests a favorable report with the amendment.

Thank you,

Handwritten signature of Jefferson L. Ghrist in black ink.

Delegate Jefferson L. Ghrist
Co-Chair

Handwritten signature of Natalie Ziegler in black ink.

Delegate Natalie Ziegler
Co-Chair