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Budget and Taxation Committee
Chair, Capital Budget Subcommittee

Chair, Senate Democratic Caucus

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony of Senator Craig J. Zucker
Senate Bill 861/House Bill 1071-Environment – Stormwater Management for
Agritourism
April 2, 2026
1:00pm
Position: Favorable

Good afternoon, Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, and distinguished members of the Environment and Transportation Committee. I am here to testify in support of **Senate Bill 861 - Environment - Stormwater Management for Agritourism**. This bill is identical to its crossfile, House Bill 1071, and passed the Senate unanimously. I would also like to thank Delegate Foley and the District 14 and District 15 delegations for their support.

SB 861 requires MDE's stormwater management rules and regulations to, in consultation with the Maryland Department of Agriculture, define "agritourism" and consider best management practices for stormwater management for agritourism operations, including the creation of a standard plan for temporary parking areas and the use of pasture, meadows, and cropland for the treatment of stormwater runoff. The bill also requires Montgomery County and the Montgomery County Soil Conservation District, in consultation with MDE, to jointly review the county's current process for reviewing and approving stormwater management plans for agritourism and report their findings to the Governor and the General Assembly by December 31, 2026.

This bill addresses a problem that both the District 14 and District 15 delegations have heard about from farmers and agricultural businesses in Montgomery County's agricultural reserve. Maryland's stormwater management framework was designed for urban and suburban development, and applying those same standards uniformly to working farms creates compliance burdens that do not reflect the realities of agricultural operations.

Current guidance does not distinguish between agricultural land uses and commercial development. Temporary grass parking for seasonal events, cropland and pasture used for stormwater calculations, and rotational farming activities are fundamentally different from a parking lot or a shopping center, yet farmers are being held to the same standards. This leaves little room for site-appropriate solutions.

After constituents raised these concerns, we have been working collaboratively with Montgomery County, MDE, and MDA on a path forward. Notably, MDE is already in the process of updating its stormwater regulations and has extended the public comment period specifically to seek input on agricultural concerns. MDE has also committed to creating a standard plan for temporary parking areas for agritourism activities on farms, exactly the kind of practical, site-appropriate solution this bill calls for.

I respectfully urge a **favorable report on Senate Bill 861**. Thank you for your consideration.