



Maryland Farm Bureau

3358 Davidsonville Road | Davidsonville, MD 21035
410-922-3426 | www.mdfarmbureau.com

March 6, 2026

To: House Environment and Transportation Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

RE: **Support of HB1342 Agriculture - Controlled-Environment and Hydroponic Agriculture**

On behalf of the over 7,000 member families of the Maryland Farm Bureau, I submit written testimony in support of HB1342 Agriculture - Controlled-Environment and Hydroponic Agriculture. This legislation strengthens the State's commitment to expanding controlled-environment and hydroponic agriculture as an important and emerging part of Maryland's agricultural landscape.

As the demand for locally produced food continues to rise, and as farmers navigate ongoing challenges related to land availability, climate variability, and resource management, controlled-environment agriculture provides a valuable opportunity to increase production capacity while using land and water more efficiently. HB 1342 offers a thoughtful and forward-looking approach that complements traditional farming rather than replacing it, ensuring that Maryland remains competitive and adaptable in a changing agricultural economy.

This legislation makes meaningful improvements by expanding eligibility for the Urban Agriculture Water and Power Infrastructure Grant Fund to include controlled-environment and hydroponic farms, producers who frequently face high upfront costs for specialized energy and water systems. These investments will enable more Maryland farmers, including small-scale and urban producers, to improve infrastructure, increase productivity, and contribute more reliably to local food systems. Additionally, the creation of a statewide one-stop portal for permitting and licensing will help reduce regulatory confusion, allowing producers to spend more time farming and less time navigating agency processes.

HB 1342 further supports long-term agricultural workforce development by establishing the Controlled-Environment and Hydroponic Agriculture Workforce Training Initiative. As technology-driven growing methods expand, Maryland will need a skilled workforce trained in areas such as environmental controls, hydroponic systems management, and modern crop production techniques. The ability of community colleges to access matching funds for curriculum development will help build that pipeline and support the next generation of agricultural professionals.

The Farm Bureau also appreciates the bill's recognition of emerging farm sectors within procurement goals for certified local farms. Creating a gradual and achievable pathway for controlled-environment agricultural products to enter public purchasing markets helps diversify



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local food procurement while still upholding Maryland's commitment to supporting all types of local farms.

For these reasons, the Maryland Farm Bureau supports HB 1342 and urges a favorable report. This legislation strengthens Maryland agriculture, expands opportunities for growers of all types and sizes, and builds the infrastructure and workforce necessary for a resilient local food system.

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