



Senate Bill 352 Old Line Plate Written Testimony

Date: March 31, 2026

For Information

Submitted to: House Environment and Transportation Committee

Submitted by: Chesapeake Bay Trust and the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation

Maryland has two specialty license plate tags, the “ag tag” and the “bay plate.” The revenue from the ag tag is managed by the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation (MAEF), a nonprofit dedicated to increasing [agricultural literacy](#) with programs serving pre-kindergarten through post-secondary audience. The revenue from the bay plate is [distributed to hundreds of community-based not-for-profit entities as determined via a thorough, peer review-based vetting process](#) (Fig. 1) by the legislatively created Chesapeake Bay Trust. The Trust serves as the legislature’s natural resources community-based grant-maker, carefully determining where dollars should be invested. The Trust was intentionally not created with an operating appropriation, instead using resources from the bay plate (and a tax checkoff) for both the grants it distributes and operating expenses, with on average 92 cents of every dollar going to programs (an exceptionally high proportion as per Charity Navigator).

Numbers of ag tags and bay plates sold per year have remained relatively constant since 2010, maintained with active marketing programs. The plate revenue is the backbone of both organizations’ larger revenue streams. For example, the Trust leverages plate revenue to attract \$20-30 million more from other sources to be [distributed to and sustain nonprofits around the region](#).

The Nature of License Plate Revenue

As many members of the committee know, the Trust and MAEF together follow the license plate picture in Maryland each year. Because there is a finite number of registered vehicles, and therefore a finite number of potential bay/ag-tag purchasers, there is a finite number of bay/ag tags to be sold. Data from other states show that only about 7-10% of car owners will spend additional money for a specialty license plate (Figure 2 below), [driven, as we know from public opinion polling, mainly by aesthetics](#). Maryland is at about 10% saturation level now. Therefore, new license plate specialty options are not likely to lead to an increased number of people choosing them.

This Bill: SB 352

It is our understanding that the Old Line Plate is intended to be administered in small quantities (which drives the high demand which, in turn, commands a higher dollar at auction) for a finite period of time. We therefore appreciate the Senate amendment that limits the number of Old Line Plates that can be produced to 999 (three numeric digits.) As a result of this amendment, the negative impact on the bay plate and the ag tag would be minimal. (Though not zero: By definition, if a vehicle owner purchases an Old Line plate, he/she/they cannot also purchase a ag/bay tag, and some ag/bay tag owners will trade their tags in for Old Line plates).

Figure 1: Funds from license plates are distributed to hundreds of carefully vetted not-for-profit organizations (e.g., homeowners associations, community development organizations, teachers and schools, faith-based organizations, local governments, nonprofits) annually. Each dot below represents an individual or cluster of community-led projects that can be explored via the [interactive map here](#). (Non-Maryland projects are supported with other funds.)

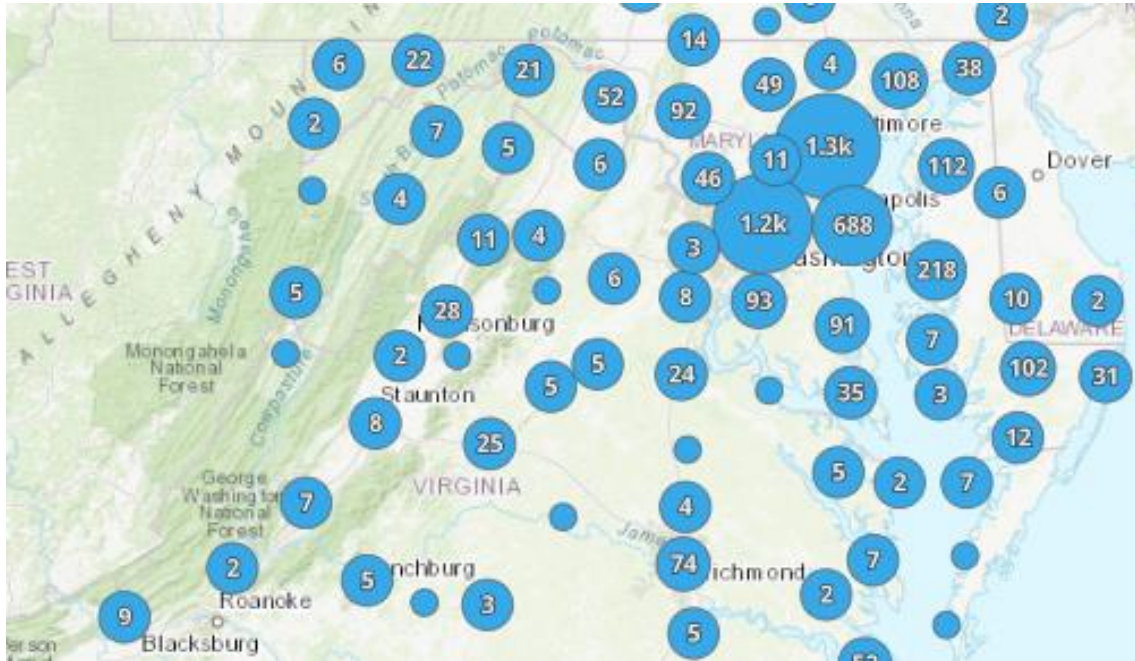


Figure 2: Market saturation of background scene/specialty license plates occurs at about 7-8% of the vehicle owners

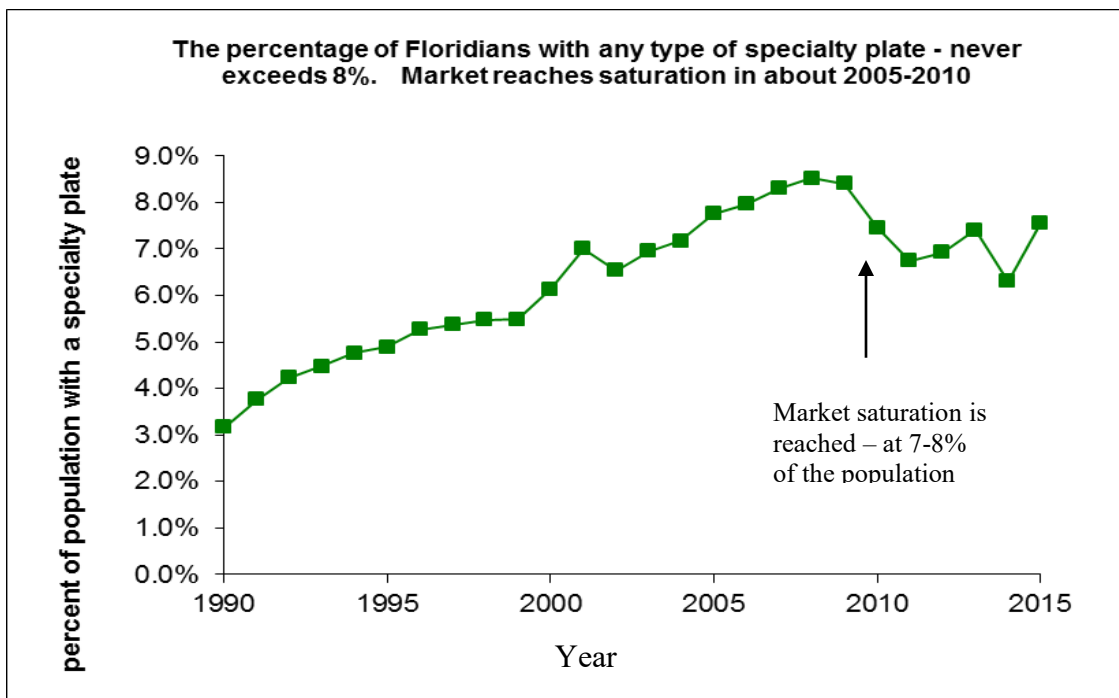


Figure 3a: Examples of decreases in specialty license plate revenue with increasing #s of additional plates: Blue line shows the # of plate options for vehicle owners, and the pink lines are the revenue generated by the plate (e.g., the # of people who buy them.)

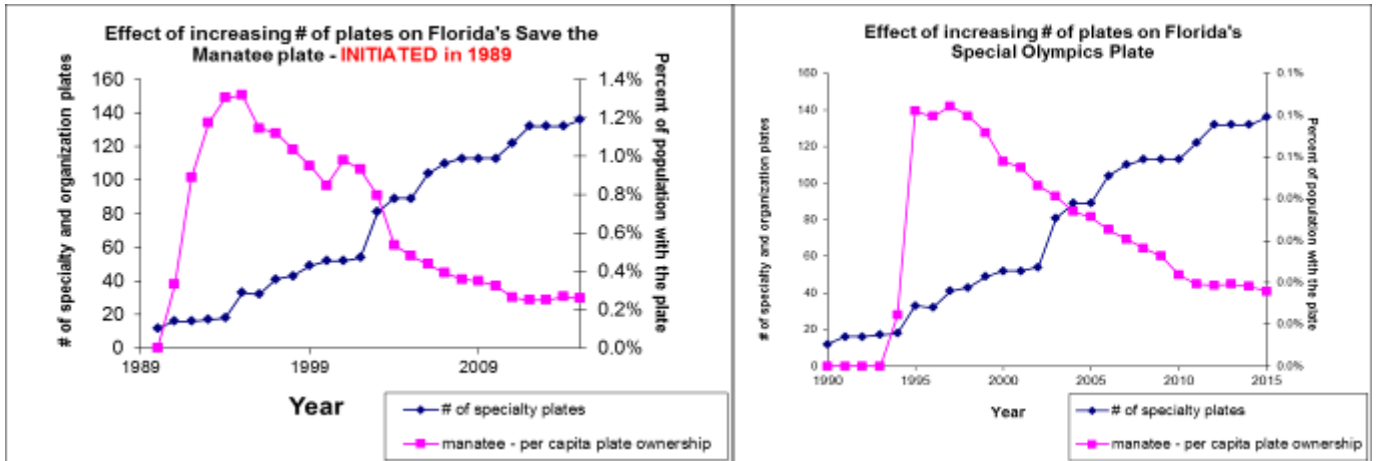
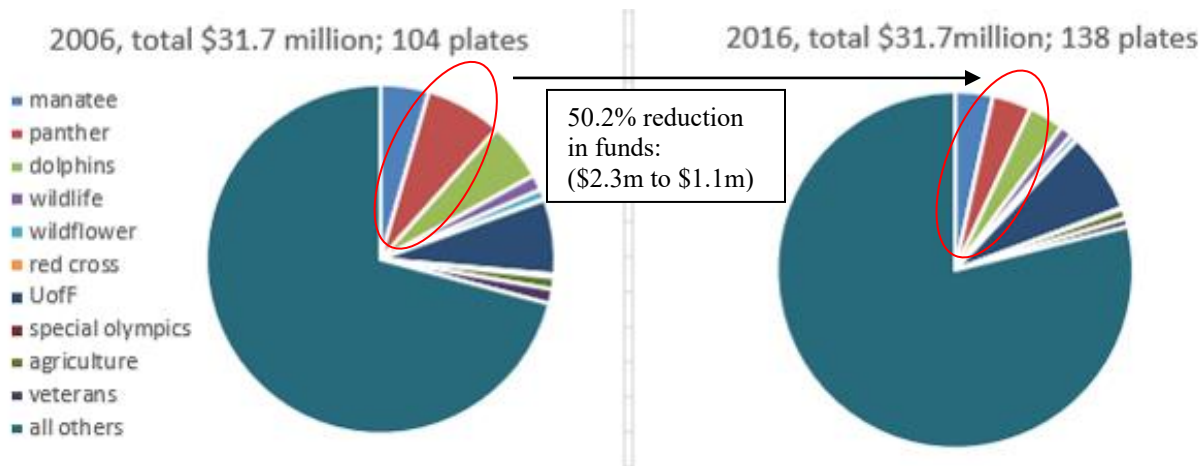


Figure 3b: The “Pie Problem:” In 2006 and 2016, Floridians spent the same total amount on specialty license plates, despite more options in 2016. The plates that existed in 2006 all had lower revenues (smaller pieces of the pie) in 2016. E.g., the panther plate generated \$2.3m in 2006 then dropped to \$1.1m with more plate options in 2016 (red pie slices below)



About the Chesapeake Bay Trust

The Trust was created by the Maryland General Assembly in 1985 as a nonprofit grant-making organization with a goal to empower community-based groups to play a role in the restoration of the state's local rivers, streams, parks, and other natural resources in diverse communities across the state, from the mountains of Western Maryland and the Youghiogheny watershed to the marshes of the Coastal Bays. The goal was to create an entity that complements state agency work by empowering groups on the ground: schools, nonprofit organizations, faith-based and reach large institutions, homeowners associations, community and civic associations, and other types of groups.

The Trust is known for its efficiency, putting more than 90 cents of every dollar into programs. The Trust has awarded close to \$200m through 13,000 grants and projects in every county in Maryland since 1985. We now average about 500 grants and other awards a year and have about 1,000 active awardees at a time.

Due to its efficiency, the Trust has been rated with the maximum four-star rating by the nation's leading charity evaluator, Charity Navigator, for more than two decades, putting it in the top 1% of non-profits in the nation.

One of the Trust's basic tenets in its strategic plan is to engage under-engaged audiences in natural resources issues. Every individual in our area benefits from healthy natural resources, and in turn, every individual can help natural resources.



About the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation

Dedicated to increasing agricultural literacy and agricultural education, the Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation (MAEF) is a nonprofit organization with programs serving pre-kindergarten through post-secondary audiences. MAEF signature programs include mobile science labs; mobile agricultural showcases; professional development courses for teachers and Maryland FFA.

Agriculture plays a critical role in our lives, providing elements that are essential to life while at the same time supporting Maryland's economy, environment and quality of life. It provides an engaging context for teaching science, social studies, life skills, mathematics, and language arts. Incorporating agriculture into teaching and learning creates the foundation that students, as future citizens, need to make educated decisions regarding food choices and nutrition, community issues, land use planning, and natural resource conservation.



MAEF works closely with the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and post-secondary partners to ensure that the next generation of agriculturalists and those in professions which support Maryland agriculture have opportunities to prepare for careers. With 50 agriculture programs in public schools across the state, MAEF provides support for agriculture teachers through professional development,

classroom support and curriculum training. MAEF's administration of Maryland FFA, with grant support from MSDE, empowers nearly 3,000 members to grow as leaders, learners and advocates for agriculture, the environment and natural resources in Maryland. Through hands-on experiences, competitions and leadership development, Maryland FFA equips young people with the confidence and skills they need to make a positive impact in their careers.

Agriculture plays a critical role in our lives. It provides an experiential teaching tool for the core curricula of science, social studies, life skills, mathematics, and language arts. Incorporating agriculture into teaching and learning creates the foundation that students, as future citizens, need to make educated decisions regarding food choices and nutrition, community issues, land use planning, and natural resource conservation.



The Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation, Inc. is a 501(c)3 non-profit, non-governmental organization established in 1989.