

February 25, 2020

SUPPORT HB 687/SB597: Agriculture - Cost-Sharing Program - Fixed Natural Filter Practices

Dear Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee:

I strongly support HB 687/SB597: Agriculture - Cost-Sharing Program - Fixed Natural Filter Practices. I believe farmers interested in soil- and climate-friendly projects deserve reliable and equitable access to state cost-share assistance.

As a Maryland farmer I feel it is imperative to have a system that allows flexibility to use mixed species cover crop to pursue soil health. This not only gives the benefit of ground cover, but also gives greater flexibility in green fertilizer thus reducing application of commercial fertilizer. Having a robust system that encourages transitioning row crop into pasture acres is important as this is the best opportunity to continually hold soil and protect the bay. Pasture development is a large capital investment with prolonged benefits to the ecosystem. Additional funding opportunities can make this a viable option for more farmers.

I strongly urge a favorable report on this important bill. Maryland has made significant progress on its Chesapeake Bay cleanup, but there is still work to be done. Reductions in pollution from agriculture will be critical to reaching the State's Clean Water Blueprint goals for 2025. Updating the MACS Program is a common-sense step to continue our progress.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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