



March 4, 2020

To: House Environment & Transportation Committee

From: MidAtlantic Farm Credit

Bill: HB 1312 – Water Pollution Control – Discharge Permits – Industrial Poultry Operations

Position: Oppose

MidAtlantic Farm Credit is a member-owned cooperative supporting rural communities and agriculture with reliable, consistent credit and financial services in good times and bad. Headquartered in Westminster, MD, we are one of the largest agricultural lenders on the East Coast with almost \$2.9 billion dollars in loans outstanding to over 11,500 member-owners representing the full range of agriculture throughout our five-state territory.

This bill would define an “industrial poultry operation” to mean any broiler chicken farm that produces 300,000 or more chickens per year and prevent the MD Department of the Environment from issuing discharge permits to such farms – whether new operations or for the purposes of extending, or expanding existing farms.

A typical, modern poultry house produces between 30,000 and 40,000 birds per flock with 5-6 flocks per year depending on time between flocks. Using those figures as a minimum, one house could produce 150,000 birds per year – meaning this bill would eliminate new farms of more than **one** poultry house. Additionally, as drafted, this bill would prevent MDE from issuing a new permit when an existing poultry farm’s 5-year permit expires – essentially phasing out the State’s leading agricultural sector by eliminating commercial production of poultry in Maryland.

Thousands of direct and indirect jobs would be lost and/or put at risk as a result of this ill-conceived piece of legislation. Hundreds of millions of dollars of investments made by our members would be for naught and could send local towns and communities into economic disarray up and down the Eastern Shore. Grain farmers from across the state, including those in Montgomery, Howard, Anne Arundel, and Baltimore Counties could see a dramatic drop in prices they receive (in an already depressed commodities market) due to decreased local demand for the corn, wheat, and soybeans that go into chicken feed. Seemingly non-agricultural businesses that depend on a successful poultry industry – banking, real estate, accounting, marketing, electricians, etc. – would also be severely impacted if this bill were to become law.

For these reasons, we oppose **HB 1312** and strongly urge an **Unfavorable Report**.


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