



Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

3358 Davidsonville Road • Davidsonville, MD 21035 • (410) 922-3426

February 15, 2023

To: House Environment & Transportation Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

Re: **Support of HB 378 - Natural Resources - Black Bear Conflict Reduction and Damage Reimbursement Fund - Uses**

On behalf of our Farm Bureau member families in Maryland, I submit this written testimony in support of HB 378, legislation that alters the Black Bear Damage Reimbursement Fund to authorize grants from the Fund to be made for projects that reduce conflicts between black bears and humans. It renames the Black Bear Damage Reimbursement Fund to be the Black Bear Conflict Reduction and Damage Reimbursement Fund. The bill increases the minimum and maximum amounts of reimbursement from the Fund per person annually authorized for damage caused by black bears from \$200 to \$500 and \$3,000 to \$5,000. It also requires a minimum of \$50,000 be available annually for the reimbursement of black bear damage. Lastly, it requires the Governor to include at least \$1,000,000 in the annual budget bill for the Fund.

Currently, there is very little funding in the program and the funding sources are through private donations and the sales of a bear portrait by DNR. This bill would put funding into a much-needed program for farmers and landowners that have damage from black bears.

MDFB Policy: We urge DNR to explore, develop and implement effective, innovative practices to control the black bear population in our state. We request DNR to reimburse farmers for crop damage caused by wildlife.

Maryland Farm Bureau requests two amendments to the bill. We ask that the reimbursement fund be increased to \$75,000 annually and the minimum amount of the reimbursement requirement be eliminated so smaller damages aren't excluded from being reimbursed.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS HB 378 & REQUESTS A FAVORABLE REPORT

Colby Ferguson
Director of Government Relations

For more information contact Colby Ferguson at (240) 578-0396