



# Maryland Department of Agriculture

*Office of the Secretary*

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## Maryland Department of Agriculture

### Legislative Comment

**Date: February 23, 2024**

**BILL NUMBER:** HB 1042/SB 932

**SHORT TITLE:** Maryland Agriculture BMPs Best in Show Program- Established

**MDA POSITION:** SUPPORT with amendments

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HB 1042 establishes a MD Agricultural BMP Best in Show Program at the Department of Agriculture (MDA) to provide and prioritize the use of certain funding relating to agricultural best management practices (BMPs) and to increase the cost-effectiveness and environmental, social, and health impacts of State-funded BMPs in a certain manner. Requiring the MDA to administer and manage certain competitive grants under the Program in a certain manner. The bill would require an applicant to provide certain information relating to proposed BMPs.

MDA welcomes a targeted approach to accelerate water quality in Maryland's tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. MDA worked with the sponsor, as well as MDE and DNR to consolidate the bill language in order to better administratively manage outcomes and the success of the program. HB 1042 can be implemented with ease by stacking incentives on top of current cost share programs using an existing approach that Maryland farmers are both familiar with and trust. The bill can provide an incentive-based approach to targeted areas above costs reimbursement.

Currently, cost share practices have been identified by the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) as effective practices for nutrient and soil reduction losses to local waterways. The bill gives the MDA the flexibility to amend the list as needed to include new practices where science shows water quality benefits. Incentivizing these practices where faster response to water quality is the best approach.

Using location criteria for incentivized high priority practices, MDA would develop an incentive payment schedule on top of existing cost-share payments. Incentives for high priority best management practices in specific locations above costs reimbursement to farmers for practices that the state would like implemented to meet water quality goals and is a benefit to both the farmer as well as the state.

MDA requests a favorable report on HB 1042.

If you have additional questions, please contact Rachel Jones, Director of Government Relations at [Rachel.Jones2@maryland.gov](mailto:Rachel.Jones2@maryland.gov) or (410) 841-5886.