



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

LEGISLATIVE COMMENT

DATE: 2/10/2016 BILL NO.: HB 443

SUBJECT: AGRICULTURE - INDUSTRIAL HEMP - AGRICULTURAL OR ACADEMIC RESEARCH

COMMITTEE: ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION

MDA POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION

Because industrial hemp is a variety of cannabis, and cannabis is a Schedule 1 Controlled Substance under the federal Controlled Substance Act of 1970, it has been strictly regulated by the federal government. This has complicated any action that states might take regarding industrial hemp as an agricultural crop.

The Agricultural Act of 2014, or the 2014 Farm Bill, featured Section 7606 which allows for institutes of higher education and state departments of agriculture to begin cultivating industrial hemp for academic or agricultural research purposes. Specifically, the law allows these activities in States that permit the growth or cultivation of industrial hemp under the laws of the State in a manner that ensures that only institutions of higher education and State departments of agriculture are used to grow or cultivate industrial hemp; requires that sites used for growing or cultivating industrial hemp in a State be certified by, and registered with, the State department of agriculture; and authorizes State departments of agriculture to promulgate regulations to carry out the pilot program in the States in accordance with the purposes of this section.

HB0443 has specific language that matches the above requirements of Section 7606. This bill could allow for an institute of higher learning in Maryland to conduct research on industrial hemp as a potential fiber and oilseed crop in the state in compliance with federal law.