



Maryland Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary

Larry Hogan, Governor
Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor
Joseph Bartenfelder, Secretary
Julianne A. Oberg, Deputy Secretary

The Wayne A. Cawley, Jr. Building
50 Harry S. Truman Parkway
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
www.mda.maryland.gov

Agriculture | Maryland's Leading Industry

410.841.5880 Baltimore/Washington
410.841.5914 Fax
800.492.5590 Toll Free

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

LEGISLATIVE COMMENT

DATE: March 1, 2019

BILL NUMBER: HOUSE BILL 1123

SHORT TITLE: AGRICULTURE - HEMP RESEARCH AND PRODUCTION

MDA POSITION: SUPPORT

EXPLANATION:

House Bill 1123 would alter and amend the current Industrial Hemp Pilot Program to give the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) authority to administer the new Hemp Farming Program and Hemp Farming Fund.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Chapters 475 and 476 of 2018 established an Industrial Hemp Pilot Program administered by MDA. Upon passage of Chapters 475 and 476, the department promulgated regulations around the program. As of January 18, 2019, MDA is now accepting applications for its industrial hemp pilot program which allows farmers to partner with institutions of higher learning to grow industrial hemp for research purposes. To date, MDA has received three completed applications which have been approved. The program receives daily inquiries from people looking for information on the program, potential markets, agronomic advice and more.

The 2018 United States Farm Bill permanently legalized hemp and hemp products, establishing them as agricultural commodities, and removing them from the purview of the Controlled Substances Act. The Farm Bill requires state departments of Agriculture to develop a plan under which the State monitors and regulates hemp production. At the time the Farm Bill was signed into law, Maryland was one of 41 other states to pass legislation establishing a program for hemp research. USDA is currently in the early stages of their regulatory process and they are not expected to have regulations completed and approved until late 2019 or early 2020. This means that USDA will not be able to accept any state plans until that point.

With the passage of this bill, HB 1123, Maryland would become compliant with the permanent

hemp program permitted by the Farm Bill by expanding our current definition of “hemp,” and developing processes to design a state hemp program for approval by the United States Department of Agriculture.

MDA ASKS FOR A FAVORABLE REPORT FOR HOUSE BILL 1123.

If you have additional questions, please contact Cassie Shirk, Director of Legislation and Governmental Affairs, at cassie.shirk@maryland.gov or 410-841-5886.