



Maryland Department of Agriculture

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MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

LEGISLATIVE COMMENT

DATE: February 12, 2020

BILL NUMBER: HOUSE BILL 161

SHORT TITLE: NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT - PROFESSIONAL FERTILIZER APPLICATORS -
REQUIREMENTS AND PENALTIES

MDA POSITION: SUPPORT

EXPLANATION:

The Maryland Department of Agriculture's Nutrient Management Program issues turf business licenses; however, there is no provision in current statute for the department to require business licenses. Turf business licenses are mentioned in regulation, but not in law. This legislation would clarify that and strengthen the department's ability to seek legal action against a business that is found to be out of compliance.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Maryland's lawn fertilizer law helps protect the Chesapeake Bay from excess nutrients entering its waters from a variety of urban sources, including golf courses, parks, recreation areas, businesses and hundreds of thousands of lawns.

The department offers fertilizer applicator training and certification exams throughout the year. Professional Turfgrass Fertilizer Applicator Certificates may be renewed yearly as well as verification of two hours of annual recertification training. Licenses are required for individuals and businesses that fertilize turf. License holders are required to file an annual activity report with the department by March 1 covering the previous year

Fertilizer nutrients, primarily nitrogen and phosphorus, when applied inappropriately can wash into nearby storm drains and streams that empty into the Chesapeake Bay. Once in our waterways, fertilizer contributes to the growth of algae blooms that block sunlight from reaching Bay grasses, rob the water of oxygen and threaten underwater life. Lawn

fertilizer now accounts for approximately 44 percent of all commercial fertilizer sold in Maryland. While certain restrictions on fertilizer use have been in place for farmers since 2001, everyone needs to do their part to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay. Maryland's lawn fertilizer law took effect October 1, 2013.

Lawn care professionals hired to apply fertilizer to lawns must be certified by the Maryland Department of Agriculture or work under the direct supervision of an individual who is certified including professionals for hire as well as individuals responsible for turf management.

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