



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

LEGISLATIVE COMMENT

DATE: 2/14/2018 BILL NO.: HB 515

SUBJECT: **Agriculture – Palmer Amaranth – Noxious Weed List Addition**

COMMITTEE: **ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION**

MDA POSITION: **LETTER OF INFORMATION**

EXPLANATION:

HB 515 would place Palmer Amaranth on the state's noxious weed list.

COMMENT:

The addition of Palmer amaranth (*Amaranthus palmeri*) to the noxious weed list would place additional fiscal burdens on the Department's staff that currently oversees the noxious weed program. Palmer amaranth is known to exist throughout the entire state of Maryland, especially on the Eastern Shore. MDA recognizes the problems associated with this weed i, however, with a staff of only two full-time employees the department does not have the manpower necessary to take on this species of weed..

This bill would require additional resources at both the state and county levels. The department estimates that the noxious weed program would require three additional full-time employees and two contractual field employees during the growing season. The additional program staff would be placed throughout the state. The program would also need five additional vehicles, computer equipment, office space and additional supplies.

The noxious weed program works with county weed control programs and there are only fifteen counties in the state that participating in the program at this time. The program would request the reinstatement of a cost-share program and require all Maryland counties to participate. Requiring county participation is the only way we will be successful in controlling this weed.

A preferred alternative to adding this species to the noxious weed list would be education and outreach, allowing agriculture professionals and landowners to gain knowledge on plant identification and treatment. MDA is committed to addressing the concerns of the agriculture community, and will hold a stakeholder meeting on February 28 to discuss possible methods to combat this weed, which is causing so many problems for our farmers.. MDA thanks the committee for allowing them to comment on this very important and ongoing matter facing our agriculture community.