



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

LEGISLATIVE COMMENT

DATE: 2/14/2018 BILL NO.: HB 698

SUBJECT: AGRICULTURE- INDUSTRIAL HEMP PILOT PROGRAM- ESTABLISHMENT

COMMITTEE: ENVIRONMENT AND TRANSPORTATION

MDA POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION

EXPLANATION:

HB 698 establishes an Industrial Hemp Pilot Program, the purpose of which is to authorize and facilitate the research of industrial hemp and any aspect of growing, cultivating, harvesting, processing, manufacturing, transporting, marketing, or selling industrial hemp for agricultural, industrial, or commercial purposes.

COMMENT:

An emerging sector within the agriculture industry, industrial hemp has started to gain tracking in 34 states throughout the country with about 26,000 acres now in production for research and productive trials. HB 698 looks to give the regulatory framework for institutions of higher education and farmers the means to partner together to overcome current federal restrictions for the growing, harvesting, and processing of industrial hemp in Maryland.

MDA will certify and register all sites within the state that have applied to grow, harvest, process industrial hemp in Maryland. MDA will provide regulatory oversight to "Institutions of Higher Education" at all sites that have been approved to grow industrial hemp

To provide regulatory oversight of the Industrial Hemp Pilot Program in Maryland, MDA will require one Agronomist II position to administer the program. This position will monitor all aspects of the program for compliance to hemp regulations; including, but not limited to field location and size, variety planted, isolation distance, harvest total and inventory. Costs incurred the first year to administer the program will include; agronomist II, vehicle fuel and maintenance, cell phone, laptop and drone, travel to national meetings and office supplies, for a total cost of \$117,583.

MDA recognizes that industrial hemp is a value commodity for emerging processing and manufacturing markets. There must be guidance from our university extension system to provide growing and nutrient management guidelines for our farmers to properly grow this crop to ensure water quality and environmental stewardship.