



Maryland Department of Agriculture

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MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

LEGISLATIVE COMMENT

DATE: February 19, 2019

BILL NUMBER: SENATE BILL 446

SHORT TITLE: PUBLIC SAFETY - AGRITOURISM - PERMIT EXEMPTION

MDA POSITION: INFORMATION

EXPLANATION:

This bill exempts an agricultural building in Baltimore County that is used for agritourism from a permit requirement. This exemption also allows up to 200 people in the building.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (department) works to support the sustainable, economic success of the State's farmers. In a state with many consumers who have the resources to spend on recreation, agritourism presents a viable opportunity to diversify farm operations. Agritourism supports the preservation of farm-based amenities, fits well with maintaining open space, helps counties retain cultural, historic values and can protect our counties' sense of place.

The last agricultural census completed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service in 2012 indicated there were 307 agritourism farms in Maryland, with revenues of \$7.3 million.

In 2018, the General Assembly passed legislation allowing counties the opportunity to adopt a statewide definition of agritourism in zoning and other ordinances. Governor Hogan signed Chapter 672 of 2018 (House Bill 252) into law in May 2018. This law defines "agritourism" as an activity conducted on a farm that is offered to a member of the general public or to invited guests for the purpose of education, recreation, or active involvement in the farm operation. This includes farm tours, hayrides, corn mazes, seasonal petting farms, farm museums, guest farms, pumpkin patches, "pick your own" or "cut your own" produce, classes related to agricultural products or skills, and picnic and

party facilities offered in conjunction with any agritourism activity.

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