HOUSE BILL 1063

By: Delegates Stein, Healey, Lafferty, Morhaim, Platt, and Robinson
Introduced and read first time: February 8, 2017
Assigned to: Environment and Transportation

Committee Report: Favorable with amendments
House action: Adopted
Read second time: March 8, 2017

CHAPTER _____

1 AN ACT concerning

Agriculture – Maryland Healthy Soils Program

FOR the purpose of establishing the Maryland Healthy Soils Program for certain purposes; requiring the Department of Agriculture to provide certain incentives to farmers to implement certain farm management practices that contribute to healthy soils; requiring the Department to determine whether the Program may be implemented in a manner to enhance other certain programs; defining certain terms; and generally relating to the Maryland Healthy Soils Program.

BY adding to
Article – Agriculture
Section 2–1901 to be under the new subtitle “Subtitle 19. Maryland Healthy Soils Program”
Annotated Code of Maryland
(2016 Replacement Volume)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article – Agriculture

SUBTITLE 19. MARYLAND HEALTHY SOILS PROGRAM.

2–1901.

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.
[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.
Underlining indicates amendments to bill.
Strikeout indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.
(A) (1) In this subtitle the following words have the meanings indicated.

(2) “Healthy soils” means the continuing capacity of soil to:

   (I) Function as a biological system;

   (II) Increase soil organic matter;

   (III) Improve soil structure and water and nutrient holding capacity; and

   (IV) Sequester carbon and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

(3) “Program” means the Maryland Healthy Soils Program.

(B) There is a Maryland Healthy Soils Program.

(C) The purpose of the Program is to:

   (1) Improve the health, yield, and profitability of the soils of the State;

   (2) Increase the biological activity and carbon sequestrian capability of sequestration in the soils of the State by promoting practices based on emerging soil science, including planting mixed cover crops, adopting no–till or low–till farming practices, and rotation grazing; and

   (3) Promote more widespread use of healthy soils practices among farmers in the State.

(D) To carry out the purposes of the Program, the Department shall:

   (1) Provide incentives, including research, education, technical assistance, and, subject to available funding, financial assistance, to farmers to implement farm management practices that contribute to healthy soils; and
(2) DETERMINE WHETHER THE PROGRAM MAY BE IMPLEMENTED IN A MANNER TO ENHANCE OTHER STATE AND FEDERAL PROGRAMS THAT PROVIDE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect October 1, 2017.

Approved:

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Governor.

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Speaker of the House of Delegates.

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President of the Senate.