

Bill No.: _____
Requested: _____
Committee: _____

Drafted by: Bond
Typed by: Don
Stored – 11/11/24
Proofread by _____
Checked by _____

By: **Montgomery County Delegation**

Requested by: Delegates Qi, Foley, Fraser-Hidalgo, Kaiser, and Wu and Ziegler and Senator Feldman
A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Department of Commerce – Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve Study**

3 **MC 15–25**

4 FOR the purpose of requiring the Department of Commerce to study the tourist and visitor
5 economy of the Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve and, on or before a certain
6 date, report its findings to the members of the Montgomery County Delegation to the
7 General Assembly; and generally relating to the Montgomery County Agricultural
8 Reserve.

9 Preamble

10 WHEREAS, There has been a consensus for decades in Montgomery County in
11 support of preserving the Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve, a large segment of
12 which is located in western Montgomery County; and

13 WHEREAS, The Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve was founded with the
14 principal goal of preserving open space and land for agriculture; and

15 WHEREAS, Farming remains the foundation of the Montgomery County
16 Agricultural Reserve and Montgomery County has established a Department of Agriculture
17 to help promote, support, and preserve farming and farmland; and

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 WHEREAS, The farming economy is a key focus of Montgomery County and its
2 Department of Agriculture and the farming economy is monitored and studied
3 continuously; and

4 WHEREAS, Outside of farming, a significant part of the land in the Montgomery
5 County Agricultural Reserve exists in the form of woodlands, open spaces, parks, historic
6 sites, and recreation areas of various kinds; and

7 WHEREAS, Small nonprofit organizations and businesses are a major part of the
8 Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve and these organizations and businesses are
9 reliant on tourists and visitors, both locally and from throughout the Washington
10 metropolitan area, to support their operations; now, therefore,

11 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
12 That:

13 (a) The Department of Commerce shall study the tourist and visitor economy of
14 the Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve to develop:

15 (1) a deeper understanding of the tourist and visitor sector of the
16 Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve due to these sectors being not as well understood
17 as the agricultural sector of the reserve; and

18 (2) policies and recommendations to help the Montgomery County
19 Agricultural Reserve thrive.

20 (b) In conducting the study required under subsection (a) of this section, the
21 Department of Commerce shall:

22 (1) (i) establish a geofence around the Montgomery County
23 Agricultural Reserve and other key attractions in the area; and

24 (ii) use geolocation technology to gather information on visitor
25 volume and how those visitors interact with other parts of the regional economy;

26 (2) engage with visitors, including by surveying visitors, to gather
27 information about visitor behavior and attitudes;

1 (3) consider whether in–depth interviews with residents, businesses, and
2 other stakeholders are necessary; and

3 (4) review existing data models to gather information on the upstream and
4 downstream impacts of visitation to the region.

5 (c) The Department of Commerce may consult with government agencies,
6 academic institutions, and stakeholders to complete the study required under this section.

7 (d) (1) On or before June 30, 2026, the Department of Commerce shall report
8 the findings of the study required under this section, in accordance with § 2–1257 of the
9 State Government Article, to the members of the Montgomery County Delegation to the
10 General Assembly.

11 (2) In considering the data and its findings, the Department shall:

12 (i) examine how tourists and visitors view the Montgomery County
13 Agricultural Reserve, including why they visit, where they came from, and what attractions
14 they found most compelling and why;

15 (ii) 1. identify the small businesses, recreation sites, and historic
16 sites that are located in the Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve; and

17 2. A. analyze how tourism and visitors contribute to
18 these operations and their success;

19 B. assess and evaluate the barriers that may deter visitors
20 from coming to the reserve; and

21 C. develop an overall assessment of the economic impact of
22 tourism in the reserve; and

23 (iii) make recommendations regarding policies and programs that
24 can help promote and preserve the Montgomery County Agricultural Reserve and better
25 support the small businesses, recreation sites, and historic sites that depend on the visitor
26 and tourist economy.

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1 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect July
2 1, 2025.