

Joint Resolution No. 4**(Senate Joint Resolution No. 12)**

A Senate Joint Resolution concerning

Cover Crop Cost Share Program - Expanded Area and Increased Appropriation

FOR the purpose of urging the Governor to expand the geographic area covered under the Cover Crop Cost Share Program to a certain area and ~~to increase State appropriation for the Program to a certain amount~~ to include a certain amount in the annual State budget to fund a certain objective; urging the Maryland Department of the Environment Agriculture to explore the availability of federal funding for the Cover Crop Cost Share Program; and generally relating to a certain expansion of, and a certain appropriation for, the Cover Crop Cost Share Program.

WHEREAS, As the largest estuary in the United States, the Chesapeake Bay is both a State and national treasure; and

WHEREAS, In accordance with the Chesapeake Bay Agreements, it is Maryland's goal to reduce pollution of the State's waters by a reduction of 40% in nitrogen run off from fields to groundwater and eventually to the Chesapeake Bay; and

WHEREAS, Research conducted in Maryland has clearly demonstrated that of all best management practices (BMPs), the planting of cover crops, such as rye, wheat, oats, and barley, is the most effective strategy that farmers can utilize in meeting this State goal; and

WHEREAS, Data collected by scientists at the University of Maryland has verified that for each acre planted in cover crops, approximately 25 pounds of nitrogen are removed from the soil and, thus, from the groundwater, which indicates that continuous planting of cover crops will result in a reduction in nitrogen loss that is far greater than 40%; and

WHEREAS, Since the planting of cover crops accomplishes nitrogen removal at an approximate cost of \$1 per pound, this BMP is also one of the most cost-effective control strategies available; and

WHEREAS, Without State assistance the economic return for individual farmers planting cover crops is minimal, and each year applications for the Cover Crop Cost Share Program number far more than funds available to accommodate all those who would like to participate; and

WHEREAS, The Water Quality Improvement Act of 1998 authorized \$1,500,000 in funding for a cover crop program on the Eastern Shore, an amount that was increased to \$2,000,000 for FY2001; and