

## Zawitoski, John

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**From:** Steed, Melissa  
**Sent:** Monday, February 08, 2016 4:51 PM  
**To:** Steed, Melissa  
**Cc:** joe.bartenfelder@maryland.gov; Eric Spates; Criss, Jeremy  
**Subject:** The Maryland Weed Control Program

### MONTGOMERY WEED CONTROL, INC.

February 8, 2016

RE: State Weed Control Program and Staff

Dear Montgomery County Delegation Member,

On behalf of the Montgomery Weed Control, Inc. Board of Directors, we are concerned regarding Governor Hogan's proposed budget for FY17 that terminates the State Weed Control Program within the Maryland Department of Agriculture-MDA including 4 veteran MDA positions. We encourage you to investigate this issue because we believe the MDA made this decision without all of the facts surrounding how the Weed Control Program actually works. Montgomery Weed Control Inc. is the cooperating weed control program for Montgomery County.

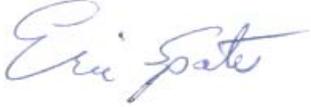
Weed Control in the State has a long legislative history that has directly contributed to Maryland's standing as a leader in land stewardship and weed control for both public and private lands. The effectiveness of the Weed Control Program in Maryland is a direct result of the leadership and oversight from these veteran MDA staff that are being eliminated. The program would not exist today without the demands from the Maryland Farm Bureau when they advocated the need for a State Weed Control program that will insure all property owners (public and private) comply with a State-wide Weed Control Law.

The Agriculture Article Subtitle 9 was created to provide clear direction and requirements for all landowners on weed control measures currently enforced by MDA. It is our understanding the MDA intends to shift the mandate and enforcement of Weed Control to the counties and we question whether this transfer of authority and enforcement can actually be done in light of the court cases and legal precedent of the State Weed Control Law. The counties simply do not have the level of expertise to effectively meet the mandate of the State Weed Control law. The enforcement power from the State-MDA carries a much higher level of authority that the counties will not be able to replicate.

We question why the Governor's budget is eliminating 4 veteran MDA positions when there is a proposed State budget surplus. One of the reasons the Weed Control Program is so successful is attributed to how the program promotes leveraging of resources. The resources from MDA staff enable the counties to leverage financial resources from other entities that include-private landowner fees and local government agencies for the actual weed control protection and spraying. The counties simply do not have the financial resources to replace the MDA positions.

The MDA budget reduction will simply transfer this unfunded mandate to the counties and the MDA will assume no fiscal or programmatic responsibilities. This outcome must be prevented because several county Weed Control Programs may end. We respectfully request the Governor propose a supplemental budget to restore the MDA Weed Control Program and 4 veteran positions. Please contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Eric Spates". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Eric C. Spates, President, Montgomery Weed Control, Inc.

18410 Muncaster Road, Derwood, Maryland 20855