

SB 616 Baltimore City - Soil Conservation District

Uploaded by: McCray, Cory

Position: FAV

CORY V. MCCRAY
Legislative District 45
Baltimore City



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Budget and Taxation Committee
Capital Budget Subcommittee
Health and Human Services Subcommittee

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Vote Yes on Senate Bill 616

Bill Title: Baltimore City - Soil Conservation District - Authority to Establish

Hearing Date: February 24, 2021 – Baltimore City - Soil Conservation District - Authority to Establish

Chair, Vice Chair and members of the Committee:

I write to you today in **support** of Senate Bill 616. Soil conservation is the process taken to protect our soil from degradation. With the lack of soil conservation, not only would our agriculture suffer, but also our water supply would be severely impacted. Biodiversity and water is dependent on soil and land.

The purpose of this Bill is to authorize and establish a Baltimore City Soil Conservation District with continued boundaries corresponding with those of the City. The establishment of a Soil Conservation District would allow for the improvement of water quality and to save taxpayers dollars, among other things.

If enacted, Senate Bill 616 would take effect on October 1, 2021.

In efforts to protect Baltimore's environment and natural resources, we hope that you will move for a **favorable** report of Senate Bill 616.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Cory V. McCray".

Cory V. McCray
State Senator

McCray_Letter of Support-Soil Conservation Distric

Uploaded by: McCray, Danielle

Position: FAV

BALTIMORE CITY COUNCIL



Councilwoman Danielle McCray

Second District

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CHAIR:

HEALTH, ENVIRONMENT, AND TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

MEMBER:

WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE

February 24, 2021

The Honorable Paul Pinsky, Chairman
The Honorable Cheryl C. Kagan, Vice Chair
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

RE: Senate Bill 616 - Baltimore City – Soil Conservation District – Authority to Establish
Position: *Support*

Chairman Pinsky & Committee Members,

I would like to express my support of Senate Bill 616. Improving the health, education, environment, and economic development of our City is imperative as we work to become more sustainable in the midst of climate change as well as create community around urban agriculture.

Urban agricultural development is vast in its functions. They include cultivating fruits, vegetables, herbs, and flowers; beekeeping, composting, and agricultural education; residential, commercial, and industrial zones; rooftop farming and controlled environmental agriculture. Having a soil conservation district will afford our farmers the technical services and resources needed to be successful without the hassles of hiring your own engineers and figuring out the complexities alone.

This opportunity is great for outreach and educational efforts. This will afford our communities new knowledge on farm-to-table, workshops on how to cultivate foods, herbs, and flowers, as well as training opportunities for urban farmers. This soil conservation district would bring our communities closer while becoming more environmentally conscious and taking direct action to curb the looming impacts of climate change. This would empower our constituents to be change makers in establishing a greener future.

There are 24 soil conservation districts across the State of Maryland covering 23 counties, and it is time for Baltimore City to follow suit.

As Baltimore City continues to make meaningful steps towards becoming more environmentally conscious, we must take action in lifting up our urban farmers. I encourage a favorable report of Senate Bill 616.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Danielle McCray". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Danielle" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "McCray".

Danielle McCray
Baltimore City Councilwoman - 2nd District

Senate Bill 616 - MASCD - Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Nelson, Jen

Position: FAV



February 24, 2021

The Honorable Paul Pinsky, Chairman
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

Re: Senate Bill 616 – Baltimore City Soil Conservation District – Authority to Establish

Position: *Support*

Chairman Pinsky & Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts to express our *support* for Senate Bill 616 – Baltimore City Soil Conservation District – Authority to Establish. This enabling legislation allows Baltimore City to establish a local soil conservation district office to serve urban farmers and city residents.

The Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts proudly represents 24 districts across the state. These individual districts promote healthy soil practices and water quality projects to improve the health of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. I respectfully request a *favorable* report of Senate Bill 616, which shows your support of the agricultural community and a healthier Chesapeake Bay.

Thank you for your kind consideration and attention to this legislation.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jen Nelson, Executive Director
Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts

MDA - SB 616 - Letter of Support.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Shirk, Cassie

Position: FAV



Maryland Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary

Larry Hogan, Governor
Boyd K. Rutherford, Lt. Governor
Joseph Bartenfelder, Secretary
Julianne A. Oberg, Deputy Secretary

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Maryland Department of Agriculture

Legislative Comment

Date: February 24, 2021

BILL NUMBER: Senate Bill 616

SHORT TITLE: Baltimore City - Soil Conservation District - Authority to Establish

MDA POSITION: Support

Senate Bill 616 would authorize the creation of a Soil Conservation District (SCD) in Baltimore City.

Maryland's existing 24 SCDs date back to the 1930's as a trusted, local provider of technical assistance for Maryland's farmers, developers and landowners. While agriculture has certainly changed since the establishment of SCDs, the mission of supporting conservation to protect our soils and water remains the same. To carry out this mission, SCDs rely on a partnership of federal, state, and local government to deliver programs, and provide staff and operating expenses.

The establishment of a new SCD in Baltimore City would address the unique and growing national and local interest in urban agriculture. The SCD will be the point of contact for Baltimore City farmers on soil erosion or stormwater issues and will help farmers manage the natural resources on their farm as part of a Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan (SCWQP). Certified conservation planners and technicians will meet with farmers to evaluate the soil, water, air, plant, and animal resources on their property and offer several alternatives to address these resource conditions. SCD staff and farmers will collaborate to select and implement the best management practices (BMPs) that work best for these unique farm enterprises. These BMPs could range from installation of high tunnel systems for plant protection from extreme weather and growing season extension to pollinator habitat for nesting and nutrition of pollinators. Implementing a SCWQP will help not only protect the urban farm's natural resources, but contribute to the overall health of the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

The Maryland Department of Agriculture supports its establishment, and stands ready to coordinate with key partners to consider roles and funding contributions for a successful SCD.

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

SB616_CBF_Support_CarmeraThomasWilhite.pdf

Uploaded by: Thomas-Wilhite, Carmera

Position: FAV



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

Senate Bill 616

Baltimore City - Soil Conservation District - Authority to Establish

Date: February 24, 2021
To: Senate Education, Health and
Environmental Affairs Committee

Position: **Support**
From: Carmera Thomas-Wilhite
Baltimore Program Manager

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** SB 616 which establishes a Baltimore City Soil Conservation District to help conservation farming practices in urban agriculture.

A Baltimore City-based Soil Conservation District will provide technical assistance needed to further urban agriculture

Soil Conservation Districts (SCDs) provide technical assistance and facilitate conservation funding for farming practices nationwide. SCDs gather local, state and federal agency staff in one office to provide resources to farmers, including conservation practices that protect water quality and prevent pollution runoff. Maryland currently has twenty-four SCDs, one for each County except Frederick County which has two, the Frederick and Catoctin soil conservation district.¹

Farming in Baltimore City consists of primarily urban agriculture which comes with a unique set of technical assistance challenges and funding needs. Many urban farms grow vegetables in “hoop houses,” which are greenhouses that extend the growing season. One of the limiting factors for Baltimore City farms is water, irrigation for their crops.

Funding for hoop houses, and technical assistance to overcome irrigation challenges could be provided by a Soil Conservation District office. For example, staff could assist urban farmers tap funding from the Federal USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service for hoop houses. The State NRCS Conservation team provides \$100,000 annually to each SCD in Maryland through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program to fund local farming projects.²

Urban agriculture creates green spaces and provide healthy produce to residents

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation has worked with Baltimore City in the greening of abandoned lots. CBF supports conservation programs including urban farming that can preserve a green print within a developed area. Green space can help mitigate stormwater runoff into local waterways and the Bay. With this legislation, Baltimore City would have assistance through a District office to target urban farming practices

¹ Maryland Department of Agriculture, [Soil Conservation Districts](#), last visited 2.18.2021.

² United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#), last visited 2.18.2021.

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to mitigate climate change, improve water quality, build healthy soils and reduce the amount of pollution in local waterways and the Chesapeake Bay.

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation also seeks to increase local food production and providing healthy food in food deserts. The current COVID pandemic has highlighted disparities and health risks associated with lack of access to nutritious food. CBF supports local food purchases through its Buy Fresh Buy Local Chesapeake program which helps consumers, sustainable farms, and businesses find each other and support efforts to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on SB 616. For more information, please contact Robin Jessica Clark, Maryland Staff Attorney at rclark@cbf.org and 443.995.8753.