



**Support for HB 269 Urban Agriculture Grant Program**  
**Sponsored by Delegate Wells**  
Position: Support

January 13, 2021

Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

We are writing in support of House Bill 269, sponsored by Delegate Wells for the establishment of a grant program in support of urban agriculture. The establishment of the grants outlined in HB 269 would allow the urban subset of small growers to thrive. Often urban farming is overlooked in its importance to the agricultural landscape, while it provides numerous benefits to Maryland's urban communities. A large volume of food can be grown in a small space, which is a critical tool in relieving food insecurity. Many of the urban farms in Frederick County are serving that need. This type of farm is also beneficial as use for otherwise vacant city lots—both providing more usable green space and the opportunity for community members to access fresh food and connect with one another in their food gardens.

Small urban farms have great potential to support Community FARE's mission, *to help safeguard a diverse and healthy local food economy and ensure that food grown here is accessible to residents of Frederick County and its regional neighbors*, through two of our programs:

- [Frederick Fresh Online](#) Community FARE and the Frederick County Food Council recently launched an online marketplace to support the economic viability of small farmers, such as those who are growing in urban landscapes, and increase access to locally grown food for Frederick County's residents, to the benefit of the local economy and environmental sustainability.
- [Frederick MD Farm to School](#), sponsored by Community FARE in collaboration with the Frederick County Public Schools, offers education (now through videos, but when school

is in session through cafeteria events), tastings, and food preparation education on local crops and farming.

According to the 2017 Census of Agriculture, Black farmers account for 1.4% of the country's 3.4 million producers--a steep decline from the 5.1 million Black famers who made up 14% of the farming population 1920. The resurgence of Black-owned farms has been prevalent in urban areas. The Urban Agriculture Grant Program and Fund can play a significant role in helping to provide more support to urban farmers, including farmers of color.

For the reasons detailed above, we support HB 269 for the 2021 session, and recommend that the Committee adopt a favorable report of HB 269. This bill will support Maryland's urban farmers, helping to create a more resilient and equitable food system.

Respectfully,

Janice Wiles  
Director, [Community FARE](#)  
Food Advocacy Resources Education  
[Farm to School](#) / [Frederick County Food Council](#)  
(240) 626 5209  
[janice@communityfare.org](mailto:janice@communityfare.org)

Melanie Smith-Bell  
Communications & Outreach  
Coordinator, Community FARE  
(301) 768-3354  
[melanie@communityfare.org](mailto:melanie@communityfare.org)