



January 15, 2021

The Honorable Kumar Barve, Chairman
House Environment and Transportation Committee

Re: House Bill 269 - Department of Agriculture - Urban Agriculture Grant Program

Position: *Support*

Chairman Barve & Committee Members:

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts to express our *support* for House Bill 269, Department of Agriculture - Urban Agriculture Grant Program. This bill establishes an Urban Agriculture Grant Program with dedicated funding within the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA). The Urban Grant Fund will authorize the distribution of up to \$400,000 annually from the unclaimed property fund.

Currently, there are 20+ Urban farms operating in Baltimore City doing everything from beekeeping to growing vegetables and flowers. Farming techniques such as vertical farming and hoop houses have been implemented all throughout the city to help contribute to a sustainable food network. These farmers have worked well within the urban environment, but at times face unique issues such as soil quality, stormwater management on non-agricultural parcels, neighbors, and much more. By providing these resilient farmers with additional funding we can help promote and grow urban agriculture within our high-density landscapes.

I respectfully request a *favorable* report of House Bill 269, which shows your dedicated support to the entire agricultural community. Thank you for your kind consideration and attention to this legislation.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jen Nelson, Executive Director
Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts