



Senate Bill 0942: Urban Agriculture Water and Power Infrastructure Grant Program and Fund - Establishment

DATE: March 15, 2022

POSITION: Favorable

The Farm Alliance of Baltimore SUPPORTS Senate Bill 0942, which establishes and sets forth funding and structural requirements for an Urban Agriculture Water and Power Infrastructure Grant Program and Fund.

The Farm Alliance of Baltimore is a membership organization of urban farms, neighborhood growers, and friends. We use connection, resource sharing, and collective advocacy with respect to food, land and water to expand communities' self-determination and power.

The Farm Alliance of Baltimore represents 18 urban farms and 12 community gardens throughout the city, comprising over 90 people who are actively engaged in urban agriculture. These are small but mighty farms, growing food, cut flowers, and fibers for their communities and farmers markets and achieving economic viability despite their small size.

Of the many financial barriers to our member farms' ability to sustain and grow their businesses, access to affordable water and power infrastructure is one of the biggest. The state of Maryland has an opportunity to become a nationwide leader in supporting the growth of the ecosystem of sustainable urban agricultural operations by removing this barrier. Water for irrigation and electricity for on-site cooling for cold-chain preservation of crops are key to any farm's sustainability, and urban farms are no exception to this. Our member farms have shown incredible resilience and innovation in pooling their resources to form the Farm Alliance of Baltimore, which provides some assistance with infrastructure costs. In 2021, through fundraising from private philanthropy, we were able to provide direct cost share assistance to farms needing water and power installations, and the federal government provided additional cost sharing. No such aid was available from the state of Maryland. With this bill, that will change. Therefore, we are in support of this Senate Bill 0942 from Senators Griffith and Hayes, and we urge the committee to take a FAVORABLE position and advance this legislation.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mariya Strauss".

Mariya Strauss, Co-Executive Director
Farm Alliance of Baltimore
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