



January 25, 2023

The Honorable Brian Feldman, Chairman  
Senate Education, Energy, & Environment Committee

**Re: Senate Bill 29 – Baltimore City Soil Conservation District - Establishment – Requirements**

Position: **Informational**

Chairman Feldman & Committee Members:

On behalf of the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts (MASCD) I am providing information regarding the establishment of a Baltimore City Soil Conservation District. MASCD, incorporated in 1956, promotes practical and effective soil, water, and natural resource related programs to all Marylanders. Through individual conservation districts MASCD provides leadership, education, cooperation, and local direction, on a voluntary basis, promoting these initiatives.

MASCD has supported the formation of a Baltimore City Soil Conservation District since 1993 and our organization believes that establishing a conservation district in Baltimore City will provide the technical and financial resources needed to navigate issues specific to urban farmers. Baltimore City farmers currently receive support from many similar sources as other farmers in the state. They receive technical assistance through the University of Maryland Extension, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and the Maryland Department of Agriculture. It is important to us that a new district follows a similar structure to existing districts because it connects them to a network that is beneficial for their success. Senate Bill 29 begins the necessary conversation, but the framework for formation is not consistent with its neighboring jurisdictions as the oversight from the State Soil Conservation Committee is absent in the bill. The State Soil Conservation Committee makes recommendations to MDA about its programs and policies and serves as a forum for districts to share information with each other, and that connectivity and representation are both important functions of any conservation district.

MASCD contains thousands of success stories ranging from innovative conservation techniques to waterway management. Conservation districts are locally led to address soil and water issues at the district level while also connecting their farmers and residents to resources at the state and federal level. Our shared success is the result of a network of partners established through a fair and just process in which the agricultural communities throughout the State are appointed and serve the common goal of their communities. A unified future for agriculture in the State of Maryland has proven to be effective when we can work together.

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

Respectfully Submitted,

Jen Nelson, Executive Director  
Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts