

January 25, 2023

Testimony before the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee  
SB 29 Baltimore City Soil Conservation District - Establishment – Requirements  
Favorable

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

Thank you for considering the important issue of expanding support for urban agriculture. I am writing to share my experiences providing technical assistance to and conducting needs assessments of urban farmers.

I am aware of about 30 farms currently operating in Baltimore City. Two-thirds of those are soil-based outdoor farms, which could potentially benefit from Soil Conservation District assistance (SCD), such as having a soil conservation plan written by SCD staff.

Based on a 2018 survey that I conducted, a significantly higher proportion of urban farmers in Maryland identify as female (48%) or African American / Black (37%) compared to the general Maryland farming population (19% and 1%, respectively).

The majority of urban farmers who responded to the 2018 survey grow fruits, vegetables, and cut flowers in land-based production systems using raised-beds, in-ground growing, and high tunnels.

Urban farmers prioritized balancing numerous goals, including producing food for themselves and their communities, creating jobs, and providing income for themselves.

Financially, urban farmers were similar to the general farming population, with about half of respondents farming part-time and selling less than \$10,000 of farm products.

In both the 2018 survey and a broader 2020 survey of Northeast US urban growers (Richardson et al., unpublished data), respondents identified navigating bureaucratic processes as a key barrier with which they needed assistance. One 2020 survey respondent wrote in *“taxes, regulations, bureaucracy, government licensing, permitting.... There is no road map, and most agencies don't know what to do with us.”*

It is my belief that SB 29 will benefit the farmers in Baltimore City and urge a favorable report. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



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**References**

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Richardson, M., Thompson, M.J., Carson, A.D., Taylor, J.R., Rangarajan, A. VanVranken, R., Hanumappa, M. Little, N.G. (unpublished data) A profile of urban agricultural growers, organizations, their needs, and differences based on profit status in the northeastern United States.