



# Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

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February 8, 2023

To: House Environment & Transportation Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

Re: **Support of HB 152 - Department of Agriculture - Urban Agriculture Grant Fund**

On behalf of our Farm Bureau member families in Maryland, I submit this written testimony in support of HB 152, legislation that expands the purpose and scope of the Urban Agriculture Grant Program and the Urban Agriculture Grant Fund, which are administered by the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA). First, the bill expands the scope of the program to apply to agricultural producers in an urban area, rather than just Baltimore City. Second, the bill expands the purpose and authorized uses of the fund to provide grants to qualified applicants, rather than just nonprofit organizations in Baltimore City. From fiscal 2025 through 2029, the Governor must include in the annual budget bill an appropriation of \$250,000 to the fund. The bill also makes various changes to provisions governing regulations that MDA must adopt relating to the grant program.

**MDFB Policy:** We support and encourage urban farming/agriculture.

We support ongoing skills development training in urban agriculture for all ages.

We support the expansion of urban farming and the creation of a clear pathway to land ownership for urban farmers.

We support grant programs to provide infrastructure for urban farms.

We support the use of Program Open Space funds to purchase easements on vacant lots and green spaces within planned urban developments and city limits to be used for urban agriculture.

To allow more flexibility to the Governor during good budget years, **Maryland Farm Bureau asks for a simple amendment to add "at least" in front of \$250,000.** This will allow for additional funding to be appropriated if he so chooses.

**MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS HB 152 & REQUESTS A FAVORABLE REPORT**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colby Ferguson'.

Colby Ferguson

Director of Government Relations

*For more information contact Colby Ferguson at (240) 578-0396*