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Testimony in Support of SB 0589 - Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland – Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission – Funding

Dear Chair Guzzone, Vice-Chair Rosapepe, and Members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for Senate Bill 0589, which aims to increase the appropriation for the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland from the Cigarette Restitution Fund. The proposal to raise the annual appropriation from \$900,000 to \$1,000,000 is a crucial step in fostering the sustainable growth of the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission.

The Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland plays a pivotal role in our community's development, and the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission, under its umbrella, contributes significantly to the prosperity of our region's agricultural sector.

As a farmer in Anne Arundel County and through my service as the Chair of the Anne Arundel County Agriculture Commission and on the Maryland Agriculture Commission, I see how effective SMADC's work is and how valued their services are by farmers. This organization plays a vital role in supporting not only farmers in their 5-county jurisdiction, but also across the state through their programs such as Maryland Market Money. This funding is key to ensuring that SMADC can continue providing excellent support, services, and programs to farmers as well as low-income Marylanders who need assistance to buy food from our local farmers.

The proposed increase in funding to \$1,000,000 is essential for the following reasons:

Supporting Agricultural Innovation: The additional funds will enable the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission to invest in innovative initiatives that benefit local farmers, promote sustainable practices, and enhance overall agricultural productivity.

Economic Impact: Agriculture is a cornerstone of our local economy, and increased funding will positively impact the financial well-being of our farmers, contributing to the economic vitality of Southern Maryland.

Educational Programs: The Commission plays a vital role in educating our community about the importance of agriculture. The increased funding will allow for expanded educational programs, ensuring that residents are informed about the value of sustainable farming practices.

I also commend the initiative to repeal the termination of certain provisions of law, ensuring consistent and uninterrupted support for the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission. This stability is crucial for planning and executing long-term projects that benefit our community.

In conclusion, I urge you to support SB 0589 and contribute to the continued growth and success of Southern Maryland's agricultural sector. This investment is not just in the Commission but in the well-being of our community as a whole.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I appreciate your dedication to the betterment of our community.

Sincerely,

Amy G. Crone