



Maryland Department of Agriculture

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Maryland Department of Agriculture

Legislative Comment

Date: February 5, 2025

BILL NUMBER: HOUSE BILL 104

SHORT TITLE: MARYLAND FARMS AND FAMILIES PROGRAM - ALTERING USE OF FUND

MDA POSITION: SUPPORT

Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) manages the Maryland Farms and Families Fund. The Program's purpose is to double the purchasing power of food-insecure residents of Maryland with limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables and to increase revenue for farmers through the redemption of federal nutrition benefits at Maryland farmers' markets and farm stands.

Budgeted at \$300,000 annually, this program matches purchases made with MDA's Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) funds, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) funds and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) funds.

This program has issued grants to non-profits as required by the current legislation. The sole recipient had been the Maryland Farmers Market Association until the organization dissolved in 2020. Since then, MARBIDCO (MD Agriculture and Resource Based Industry Development Corporation) and FFARMD (Farms and Food Access for a Resilient MD) have been the only other recipients of the grant to run the Maryland Market Money program statewide and each subcontracted SMADC to manage and distribute the fund.

This legislation will streamline the funding allocation process by allowing MDA to manage the program directly with an existing Inter Agency Agreement with the Tri County Council of Southern Maryland (TCCSMD). MDA is required to grant the fund to a nonprofit, SMADC is a subsidiary of the TCCSMD, neither of which are nonprofits, rather government entities. It is time consuming to do the RFP, get legal review, get contracts done and then money out the door. Because the contract has repeatedly been issued to the same entity, MDA is requesting to streamline the process by granting the fund directly to SMADC via the TCCSMD.

MDA would like to submit a technical amendment to clarify that the term “person” includes governmental entities. MDA thanks the Committee for your consideration and requests a favorable report on HB 104.

If you have additional questions, please contact Rachel Jones, MDA Director of Government Relations at Rachel.Jones2@maryland.gov or (667) 408-0134.