

Testimony before the Maryland Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee

Senate Bill: Senate Bill 351 "Farmers Market Integrity Act"

Committee: Sen. Education, Health and Environmental Affairs

The Honorable Paul Pinsky, Chair

Position: SUPPORT WITH SUGGESTED AMENDMENT

Date: February 11, 2020

Larry Hushour, President, Mount Airy Town Council

Larry Hushour, Town of Mount Airy, Council President.

I am here today to express my overall support for Senate Bill 351. I am concerned, however, that the bill, as written, might have a negative impact on small town Farmers Markets across our state with its drafted definition of a "Farmers Market." (10-2101 (C)) page 3, line 5.

I will conclude my testimony with a suggested amendment.

The Mount Airy Farmers Market is a production of the Mount Airy Main Street Association in conjunction with the Town of Mount Airy. The market plays a critical role within Mount Airy, serving as a community centerpiece and gathering place. Every Wednesday afternoon our Rail Yard is full of residents and vendors enjoying this iconic reminder of small town America. It promotes Healthy Eating and Active Living and boosts our local economy by providing access to fresh, healthy, locally grown and produced food.

In 2019, our Farmers Market supported 20 local vendors. It is entering its 14th year. In 2019, the market grossed well over \$113,000 over the course of 19 market days. Existing in close proximity to our down town businesses, we know added revenue seeped well beyond the market.

Three quarters of our vendors are local farmers and producers with products defined in the proposed legislation as "farm and food products." The others consists of local residents and vendors selling their own locally hand made products and artisan crafts, or providing needed, traditional services, such as knife sharpening. Local musicians are a valuable part of our Farmers Market, "usually" (depending on talent) providing a relaxing atmosphere for patrons of all ages and walks of life as they stroll through the market shopping and enjoying the fellowship that is a natural bi-product of a small town Farmers Market.

Mount Airy's concern is the definition of a "Farmers Market" in this bill might preclude small town, traditional markets from claiming the important marketing title of a Farmers Market simply because they coexist with other local artisans and services.

We would like an assurance this bill, as drafted, will NOT preclude Mount Airy's, (and other small town's) Farmers Markets from utilizing the title of Farmers Market.

If doubt exists, we propose the following amendment to 10-2101 (C).

(C) "FARMERS MARKET" MEANS A BUILDING, STRUCTURE, OR PLACE *primarily* USED BY TWO OR MORE PEOPLE FOR THE DIRECT SALE OF FARM AND FOOD PRODUCTS TO CONSUMERS. (*This does NOT preclude a venue where local farmers and producers come together with vendors providing locally crafted products and services for direct sale to consumers.*)

We applaud the committee's work and thank you for your time.

Larry Hushour