

Certified Naturally Grown
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**House Bill 896 - Environment - Statewide Green Business Certification Program –
Establishment**

*Environment and Transportation Committee
February 26, 2020*

SUPPORT

House Bill 896 charges the Maryland Department of the Environment with creating a statewide program that mirrors and conforms with the Montgomery County Green Business Certification Program (GBC).

Dear Members of the Committee:

I am executive director of Certified Naturally Grown (CNG). Today I write in support of this initiative to create a statewide green business directory. I speak from direct experience of supporting the development of the Montgomery County Green Business Certification Program, particularly by helping it to include appropriate farming businesses.

CNG is a national not for profit organization that supports the growth of sustainable agriculture by offering peer-review certification to farmers and beekeepers who produce food without synthetic chemicals or GMOs, for their local communities. Many direct-market farmers who are committed to organic farming practices appreciate that CNG is affordable, connects them with other farmers, and verifies that their practices conform to high standards for ecological food production. There are CNG farms in 47 states nationwide, and in eight Maryland counties.

Montgomery County's GBC has resulted in more farmers choosing to verify their ecological practices, which in turn enhances customer confidence, especially at farmers markets, and boosts farmer learning and success through the peer-inspection process. In addition, the added visibility provided to farms included in the GBC has helped boost their success.

If the state of Maryland were to develop a comparable GBC program it would enhance the standing of those businesses who are doing right by the environment and benefit many more hard-working farmers providing food for Maryland residents. I would be happy to assist with the development of the farming portion of this project, and know that the

For the aforementioned reasons, Certified Naturally Grown supports House Bill 896 and respectfully urges a favorable report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alice Varon".

Alice Varon
Executive Director

