



Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

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March 6, 2020

To: House Environment & Transportation Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

Re: **Support of HB 1534 - Department of Agriculture - Urban Agriculture Grant Program**

On behalf of our member families, I submit this written testimony in support of HB 1534, legislation that establishes an Urban Agriculture Grant Program within the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA), as well as an Urban Agriculture Grant Fund. The purpose of the Urban Agriculture Grant Program is to increase the viability of urban farming and improve access to urban-grown foods. The Urban Agriculture Grant Fund is to provide funds to nonprofit organizations in Baltimore City. The money allocated to the fund is intended to come from a portion of Program Open Space.

Finding new funding sources to stimulate Urban Agriculture in Maryland is critical to getting this sector of the Ag industry off the ground. The upfront input costs to starting an Urban Ag program are very high as, in many cases, infrastructure is needed as well as soil improvements. Many times, the available space is limited and more concentrated production methods are required to make the operation profitable. These land improvements typically make the project not cash flow and prevent the operation from starting. This bill is designed to lessen that economic burden on those that are trying to start an Urban Ag operation in Baltimore City. Creating jobs, providing local & healthy farm products and offering the ability for consumers in Baltimore City to actually see where their food comes from instills pride and accomplishment in those areas and addresses things like food deserts and reduces carbon prints from food.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy:

- We support and encourage urban farming/agriculture.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS HB 1534 AND REQUEST 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