



Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

3358 Davidsonville Road • Davidsonville, MD 21035 • (410) 922-3426

February 24, 2021

To: Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

Re: **Support of SB 673 - Department of Agriculture - Urban Agriculture Grant Program**

On behalf of our member families, I submit this written testimony in support of SB 673, legislation that establishes an Urban Agriculture Grant Program within the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) and an Urban Agriculture Grant Fund to support the program. The bill authorizes the distribution of up to \$400,000 from the unclaimed property fund to the Urban Agriculture Grant Fund for each fiscal year from fiscal 2023 through 2026.

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 SB 673 AND REQUEST A FAVORABLE REPORT

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colby Ferguson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Colby Ferguson

Director of Government Relations

For more information contact Colby Ferguson at (240) 578-0396