



**RE:** House Bill 540 Agriculture - University of Maryland Extension – Urban Farmer Assistance

**DATE:** February 22, 2022

**POSITION: SUPPORT**

The Maryland Campaign for Environmental Human Rights **SUPPORTS** House Bill 540, which will ensure that the University of Maryland Extension includes two statewide extension agents dedicated to providing technical assistance and training for urban farmers. The agents will specialize in production methods and crop management, and urban farm and agribusiness management.

When I founded and ran the Baltimore Orchard Program in the 2010's, I saw first-hand how urban agriculture could transform communities. It created beauty and order out of abandoned properties, a gathering place and place of pride; in the case of orchards it provided trees that would cool the harshness of heat island effects, clean the air of some particulate matter and toxins (and store it in the woody parts of the tree so that it did not get transferred to the fruit) and slow stormwater runoff. Urban farms and orchards reduce food-miles traveled (thus reducing GHG emissions) and provide fresh, healthy food to areas that need it most.

People, especially children, who grow their own food, or can see food growing in their neighborhoods, are often more likely to eat that food. So urban farms can also encourage healthier eating habits.

Urban farming enhances communities, provides accessible jobs, and eventually enhances community life. In addition, local sources of food strengthens a community's resilience when supply chains and transportation may be interrupted for any number of reasons.

Urban farms can also pilot non-conventional forms of farming, leading the way to more earth-friendly, less chemically-reliant practices.

Strengthening the capacity of our cities to create robust urban farms is a way to strengthen our neighbors, economy and society as a whole.

We urge a favorable report.

Nina Beth Cardin, Director  
Maryland Campaign for Environmental Human Rights