

February 7, 2022

To: Senate Budget & Taxation Committee

From: Chantal Brooks, 804 Cattle Company

Re: Support of SB0378 – Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland - Funding for Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission

I am Dr. Chantal Brooks. In 2016, my family and I moved to Prince George's county and started a small beef cattle farm called 804 Cattle Company. We currently sell pasture-raised beef to the local community through on farm pickups and monthly delivery. I am writing to you in strong support for SB0378 Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland - Funding for Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission. The bill is asking for an annual budget of \$900,000 from the Cigarette Restitution Fund (CRF) to be funded to the Tri-County Council of Southern Maryland for their SMADC department (TCCSMD/SMADC). The CRF fund is part of the Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) that comes into the state every year in perpetuity. SMADC currently receives \$900,000 from that fund, however it is due to sunset soon; this bill would ensure that SMADC continues to receive funding from the continual non-lapsing CRF fund.

For many years now, SMADC has utilized the CRF fund to help farmers transition out of tobacco production and into other sectors of agriculture. SMADC has a proven track record in providing valuable assistance programs, and grant funds to the farming community, as well as being a valued partner to other ag industry organizations such as the Maryland Farm Bureau, MARBIDCO, the Maryland Department of Agriculture, and others.

Funding SMADC is crucial because:

- SMADC serves 2,011 farms on 205,000 acres in the five county Southern Maryland area; Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Prince George's, & St. Mary's Counties. It also maintains several statewide agricultural programs.
- In FY22, with only \$900,000 in operating funds provided by the State to run the organization, SMADC proceeded to bring an additional \$1.3 million dollars into Maryland via non-state funding for programs and grants supporting the Maryland farming & small business community. SMADC is a good investment for the state.
- SMADC is currently in the process of building a \$4.7 million dollar Regional Agricultural Center (RAC) that will transform the agricultural business economy in Southern Maryland and beyond.
- SMADC's Maryland Market Money Program serves 550 local producers and 46 farmers markets statewide, providing over \$449,000 worth of fresh food to low income families.

Since 2016, 804 Cattle Company has worked closely with SMADC. SMADC has been our go-to resource for marketing; meeting and working with other farmers in the area; and providing valuable insights on state-funded assistance programs. In addition to their marketing of our farm through websites, articles and videos, their grants have allowed us to improve our cattle handling facilities as well as purchase freezers so that we could expand to meet the demands of Maryland residents facing meat shortages during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Their mission to provide farmers with centralized information to grow

their potential and for consumers to access these same farms is one that they have fulfilled many times over. This organization is key to farming success in Southern Maryland and must be supported.

Best Regards,

Chantal N Brooks, MD

Manager of 804 Cattle Company