

February 7, 2022

To: Senate Budget & Taxation Committee

From: Kelly Bryant

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

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written testimony. As a farmer and an agriculture teacher in Southern Maryland I am writing to express my 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, and maintains several statewide agricultural programs now as well.
- 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.

Not only has SMADC assisted me and my husband with growing our small farm business, but they also assist create opportunities for secondary agriculture programs to participate in field trips. The field trips allow students to meet subject matter experts out in the field. It may be visiting an oyster farmer, meeting with the local Soil Conservation District representatives and completing hands-on activities in the soil pit, or visiting the University of Maryland Agriculture Institute. As an agricultural instructor, I am grateful for the funding assistance SMADC provides for these hands-on activity's students need to understand the importance of agriculture in everyday life.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 301.399.9812 or kbryant@ccboe.com.

Best Regards,



Kelly Middleton Bryant

K & T Kettle Corn and Certified Agriculture Teacher in Charles County Public Schools