

February 7, 2022

To: Senate Budget & Taxation Committee

From: Felicia Mumbert

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

As a local homesteader and gardener living on a farm in Southern Maryland, 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, 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.

I have never been more impressed with an organization's consistent and excellent service, reputation in the community, or ability to partner with people from all walks of life than I have with SMADC. SMADC has thrived under excellent leadership with well-defined core values that serve as its legacy and focus. Living on a farm in Southern Maryland has given me a deeper appreciation for the hard-working farmers that fuel our community, as well as an understanding of the needs of their families. SMADC has a passion that has made a huge difference in our agricultural community in Southern Maryland. They have assisted farmers and their families, fund-raised, educated and served the community, and can continue to do so if more funding is given.

Best Regards,

Felicia Mumbert

Southern Maryland Homesteader & gardener