

HB 156_FAV_MML.pdf

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Position: FAV



Maryland Municipal League

The Association of Maryland's Cities and Towns

TESTIMONY

March 30, 2022

Committee: Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Bill: HB 156 Local Governments – Urban Agricultural Incentive Zones – Authorization

Position: Support with Amendments

Reason for Position:

House Bill 156 originally allowed local governments to establish procedures for farmers to apply for “Urban Agricultural Incentive Zone” designations and authorized 100% of the sales and use tax revenue from the subsequent sale of farm products to go to local governments. However, this funding mechanism was amended out in the bill’s chamber of origin.

The Maryland Municipal League appreciates the authority this bill grants to local governments to establish these zoning designations. However, MML feels strongly that the sales and use tax funding mechanism should be included in this proposal. Municipalities in Maryland are significantly limited in the ways in which they can generate funding for necessary constituent services. This bill’s original proposal was a fair and reasonable opportunity for generating direct municipal revenue.

For these reasons, the Maryland Municipal League respectfully requests the sales and use tax mechanism be amended back in, and would respectfully request a favorable report on House Bill 156.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Scott A. Hancock	Executive Director
Angelica Bailey	Director, Government Relations
Bill Jorch	Director, Research and Policy Analysis
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Support of HB 156 - Local Governments – Urban Agri

Uploaded by: Colby Ferguson

Position: FAV



Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

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

March 30, 2022

To: Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

Re: **Support of HB 156 - Local Governments – Urban Agricultural Incentive Zones – Authorization**

On behalf of our member families, I submit this written testimony in support of HB 156, As amended, legislation that authorizes local governments to establish urban agricultural incentive zones. The bill also authorizes local governments to provide various tax incentives to persons involved in urban agricultural activities.

The bill allows municipalities to offer certain incentives (reduced water/electricity prices, tax reductions, etc) and would enable Maryland to take advantage of existing USDA grants.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy:

- We support and encourage urban farming/agriculture.
- We support modifying zoning laws to promote urban agriculture and the right to farm within urban areas and city limits.
- We support ongoing skills' development training in urban agriculture for all ages.
- We support the expansion of urban farming and the creation of a clear pathway to land ownership for urban farmers.
- We support grant programs to provide infrastructure for urban farms.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS HB 156 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

MAND testimony 2022 - Support - HB0156 - Senate He

Uploaded by: Daniel Shattuck

Position: FAV

MARYLAND ACADEMY OF NUTRITION AND DIETETICS



Date: March 30, 2022

Bill: House Bill 156 - Local Governments – Urban Agricultural Incentive Zones – Authorization

Committee: Senate Education, Health and environmental Affairs Committee
The Honorable Kumar Barve, Chair

Position: Support

The Maryland Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (MAND) represents nearly 1200 Registered & Licensed Dietitian/Nutritionists in the state who work in a variety of facilities and agencies to provide education related to nutrition for the benefit of the health our citizens.

We thank Delegate Queen for Sponsoring **HB0156: Local Governments – Urban Agricultural Incentive Zones – Authorization**. We all know that COVID had a huge effect on Food Deserts and with that thought you established the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council. Last month the Maryland Food Bank estimated that 1 in 3 Maryland citizens was food insecure.

This bill would do so much to identify ongoing Food Deserts and address the needs of our Food Insecure Citizens. Agricultural Incentive Zones would provide citizens in Food Deserts with much needed fruits and vegetables to ensure a healthy diet. We believe the Non-Profits can also involve affected citizens with some farming experiences that will help educate them in all kinds of ways.

Please let MAND know if a Registered & Licensed Dietitian/Nutritionists can be added to this program to provide nutrition education to Non-profits and citizens. MAND Dietitian/Nutritionists urge you to pass **House Bill 156**.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Susan O'Malley, MS, RD, LDN
MAND State Policy Representative

Teresa L. Turner, MS, RD, LDN, SNS, FAND
MAND President & School Nutrition Specialist

HB0156-EHE_MACo_SUP.pdf

Uploaded by: Dominic Butchko

Position: FAV



House Bill 156

Local Governments – Urban Agricultural Incentive Zones – Authorization

MACo Position: **SUPPORT**

To: Education, Health, and Environmental
Affairs Committee

Date: March 30, 2022

From: Dominic J. Butchko

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) **SUPPORTS** HB 156. This bill will grant more flexibility and resources to counties seeking to expand urban agriculture in their more developed regions.

Maryland’s growth comes with several challenges. One of the more significant hurdles facing local jurisdictions is the issue of food deserts—neighborhoods with few if any retailers or distributors of healthy and fresh foods. According to a study by Johns Hopkins University, neighborhoods with higher levels of poverty have decreased access to supermarkets. Aside from the accessibility issue, the transportation infrastructure for food also comes with significant environmental costs. These costs primarily arise from emissions and food waste.

HB 156 will give localities the power to establish urban agricultural zones while at the same time unlocking grant funding to develop those zones. Expanding agricultural production closest to the people who need it offers a path for neighborhood revitalization. New localized food production will spawn sensible growth, while also lessening food waste and emissions from transportation.

MACo supports HB 156 because it gives counties another “tool in the toolbox” to fight hunger, climate change, and poverty. It is common sense policy to incentivize local governments to establish urban agricultural zones. Accordingly, MACo urges the Committee to issue a **FAVORABLE** report for HB 156.

HB 156_dadams_fav.pdf

Uploaded by: Humon Heidarian

Position: FAV



February 9, 2022

Re: House Bill 156 (Delegate Pam Queen)

Dear Delegate Queen,

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 156 (Urban Agriculture Incentive Zones)
- Delegate Queen**

I am the owner and operator of New Brooklyn Farms, a 5-year-old urban farm business located in Mt. Rainier, MD. In 2019, I led grassroots efforts to pass 2 pieces of legislation to expand urban farming in Prince George's County. I am also a member of the Farmer Advisory Council for the Fair Farms Campaign (Waterkeepers Chesapeake).

I am writing to express my full support of House Bill 156 and your plan to establish urban agricultural incentive zones and support governance in MD.

I am excited to see House Bill 156 offer comprehensive support for the nascent yet diverse business sector that I work in.

In addition to the well-documented positive impacts on community health, education, and preservation, several case studies display the urban agriculture industry's economic viability. However, similar to its rural counterpart, the urban agriculture industry also has risk and volatility (e.g. crop failure, natural disasters), as well as high barriers to entry (e.g. land, equipment, infrastructure). I believe that urban agriculture requires similar support to reach its full economic potential. Your proposed tax credit and discounted utility rates for qualifying farmers will contribute to creating much-needed support for urban agriculture business owners in the face of financial pressures in rapidly developing urban areas.

I also believe that the proposed creation of urban agricultural incentive zone committees creates synergies with other legislation and initiatives to heighten levels of social proof and equitable leadership. These committees will build value that will expand urban agriculture's support base.

Thank you again for your efforts thus far in proposing this bill. Please let me know how I can further support your work on this issue.

Best regards,

Doug Adams

Owner - New Brooklyn Farms, Benefit LLC

grow@newbrooklynfarms.com

HB156_MDSierraClub_fav 30Mar2022.pdf

Uploaded by: Josh Tulkin

Position: FAV



P.O. Box 278
Riverdale, MD 20738

Committee: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Testimony on: HB 156 “Local Governments – Urban Agricultural Incentive Zones – Authorization”

Position: Support

Hearing Date: March 30, 2022

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club urges the Committee’s support of HB 156. This bill would give local governments the authority to define and institute urban agricultural zones that are best adapted to a local population’s specific environmental circumstances and to the unique food supply needs of the local community. The bill would establish under local law an urban agricultural incentive zone fund that would be funded through conservation innovation grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and other sources. It would also enable local governments to authorize incentives such as a property tax credit, a property tax rate freeze, and reduced rates for utility connections and service.

HB 156 would achieve its goals though the following steps:

- First an Urban Agricultural Incentive Zone Advisory Committee would be formed to determine the definitional standards and procedural steps they will use to approve the urban agricultural project applications.
- Second, interested farmers or partner organizations would apply to their local government for their project proposals to be reviewed by the Advisory Committee.
- Third, upon approval, a proposed area would be legally designated as an urban agricultural incentive zone by the local government or municipality under agreed circumstances.

HB 156 can help address a wide array of environmental and economic challenges that face conventional farming and food distribution systems. Transforming plots of urban wasteland into green farm areas increases air quality, reduces the damages caused by storm water runoff, supports the pollinators upon which our biodiversity depends, and can help connect our wildlife corridors. Urban agricultural zones can also help new entrants to farming that hope to try tier crop formations, bio nutrient recycling, integrated pest management, and other sustainable farming practices.

This bill sets up a system for urban farming that is transparent to the community and guided by the local community and government by way of the Urban Agricultural Incentive Zone Advisory Committee, which includes four community residents. In addition to potentially increasing employment opportunities for residents, urban agricultural zones can help meet the needs of their

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest [national] grassroots environmental organization. The Maryland Chapter has over 70,000 members and supporters, and the Sierra Club nationwide has over 800,000 members and nearly four million supporters.

communities and their food systems networks, with reduced need for reliance on transportation networks.

We believe there can be significant benefits from adopting different business models for growing food. The recent pandemic emphasized how vital local food supplies can be. The establishment of urban agricultural zones proposed in HB 156 also offers benefits from supporting local governance and turning underutilized urban land into business opportunities to provide local food.

HB 156 will increase local jobs while promoting local agriculture as a community resource and shared asset by allowing local governments to shape a food production system with the health of a local community as its main goal. We ask for a favorable report.

Rev. Melina Frame
Natural Places Committee
Mellframe@yahoo.com

Josh Tulkin
Chapter Director
Josh.Tulkin@MDSierra.org

HB 156 Urban Agricultural MHC Testimony -- FAVORA

Uploaded by: KIMBERLY EGAN

Position: FAV



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P.O. Box 606 | Lisbon, Maryland 21797
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One Common Bond: The Horse
One Common Voice: The Horse Council

Testimony of the Maryland Horse Council on HB 156

Local Governments – Urban Agricultural Incentive Zones – Authorization – **SUPPORT**

The Maryland Horse Council (MHC) is the trade association for all sectors of the horse industry in Maryland. Our membership includes horse farms, horse related businesses, individual enthusiasts, and breed, interest and discipline associations. As such, we represent over 30,000 Marylanders who make their living with horses, or just own and love them. MHC applauds the sponsors of HB 156 for bringing attention to the opportunities for urban agriculture.

Horses are an important part of Maryland's agriculture industry because there are more horses in Maryland (>100,000) than there are beef cattle (45,000), dairy cows (42,000), and goats (13,111) combined. There are more horses in Maryland than there are sheep (23,399), hogs (18,500), alpacas (1,660), or bison (43).¹ Maryland's equine industry has a \$2.7 billion dollar impact on the state's economy.²

There are horses in every county and in every urban area. One of the most well-known urban equine institutions is the Baltimore City Arabbers, who sell produce from horse drawn carts on the city streets. Arabbers were at one time a fixture in every urban area, but the Arabbers in Baltimore City are the only group of working Arabbers left in the country. These are minority owned business that provide needed services to food deserts and other under-served areas of the city. Designated urban agricultural incentive zones could open new doors for the Arabbers to sustain and grow their urban produce trade.

Designated urban agricultural incentives could also benefit recreational equine operations in urban areas. Equine operations in urban areas often cater to populations that do not typically have access to horses, to horse farms, or to agricultural or rural life in general. The City Ranch in Baltimore and Wheaton Park Stables in Montgomery County are two examples.

¹ See MARYLAND AT A GLANCE: AGRICULTURE, at <https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/01glance/html/agri>.

² Valued in 2022 dollars.



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City Ranch's mission is to help redirect urban youth away from violence by offering opportunities to foster personal growth through working with animals. Similarly, Wheaton Park Stables offers summer camps for children within walking distance of the most densely populated section of Montgomery County, and their programs are often the first exposure to livestock farms and large animals that their students have ever had. Wheaton Park Stables also offer therapeutic programs and employment opportunities for veterans and those with special needs.

Both City Ranch and Wheaton Park Stables have waiting lists for their summer camps and lesson programs. And both operations need significant capital investments to maintain their facilities. Urban agricultural incentives could benefit each operation immensely.

MHC is excited about the opportunities urban agriculture incentives could bring to the equine industry, and we look forward to working with local jurisdictions to create urban agricultural zones to support Maryland's most popular livestock – horses.

We urge the committee to give HB 156 a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

THE MARYLAND HORSE COUNCIL

(844) MDHORSE (844-634-6773)

Info@mdhorsecouncil.org

HB 156_CBF SUPPORT_EHE.pdf

Uploaded by: Robin Jessica Clark

Position: FAV



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education

House Bill 156

Local Governments – Urban Agricultural Incentive Zones – Authorization

Date: March 30, 2022

To: Education, Health and Environmental Affairs

Position: **Support**

From: Robin Clark, Maryland Staff Attorney

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS HB 156**. This bill would authorize a local government to designate an area as an urban agricultural incentive zone to support opportunities for local economic development associated with urban agriculture activities, providing funding for educational programs focused on nutrition and local urban farms, and improving community access to healthy food choices.

HB 156 recognizes the potential of urban agriculture and the needs of the movement at this moment.

Small, urban and suburban farms can strengthen communities, create business opportunities, and address gaps in access to healthy foods throughout Maryland, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions associated with food transport, and creating green spaces that can filter polluted air and water. In speaking with urban farmers and urban farm service providers, the greatest challenges and needs include navigating local laws and regulations and accessing needed farmer training. Though HB 156 has been amended to remove sales and use tax revenue as support for its components, the bill's creation of particular zones for urban farms, and a framework for local economic development associations to support urban farmers has the potential to move the industry forward.

Urban agriculture may improve equity and access to healthy food.

This bill may increase equity and access for low income and communities of color, especially for those communities with a lack of access to healthy, fresh, local food sources. Supporting locally grown food from sustainable farms is integral to CBF's mission to Save the Bay. CBF supports local food purchases through its [Buy Fresh Buy Local Chesapeake](#) program which helps consumers, sustainable farms, and businesses find each other and support efforts to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay. CBF's Clagett Farm supports access to food for vulnerable populations in Maryland through *From the Ground Up*, a program that for more than 40 years has provided fresh produce to people living in poverty and near-poverty in the Washington, D.C. area.¹ The proposed grant program can increase access to fresh food among those who need it most.

¹ [Social Justice Grows on Clagett Farm](#), Chesapeake Bay Foundation, last visited 1.14.2022.

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Local, regenerative food production may reduce pollution into the Chesapeake Bay.

The agriculture sector accounts for nearly one third of global greenhouse gas emissions and is the largest source of non-point pollution entering the Chesapeake Bay. This legislation is a complement to other stateside and local efforts to support a growing trend of small, regenerative, urban and suburban farms that provide fresh fruit and produce to Marylanders. The use of property within City centers, town and suburban developments for sustainable agriculture may help improve local water quality and reduce runoff into the Chesapeake Bay. If successful, the continued investments of residents in local food providers may help grow a greenprint of sustainable agriculture plots throughout Maryland's developed areas.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on HB 156. For more information, please contact Robin Jessica Clark, Maryland Staff Attorney at 443.995.8753 or rclark@cbf.org.