



Senate Bill 0601: Baltimore City Soil Conservation District –
Establishment – Requirements

DATE: March 8, 2022

POSITION: Favorable

The Farm Alliance of Baltimore SUPPORTS Senate Bill 0601, which establishes and sets forth funding and structural requirements for a Soil Conservation District in the city of Baltimore, to be administered by a governing body of five supervisors.

The Farm Alliance of Baltimore is a membership organization of urban farms, neighborhood growers, and friends. We use connection, resource sharing, and collective advocacy with respect to food, land and water to expand communities' self-determination and power.

The Farm Alliance of Baltimore represents 18 urban farms and 12 community gardens throughout the city, comprising over 90 people who are actively engaged in urban agriculture.

Our staff of six includes three trained and experienced urban farmers who collectively have over 25 years of experience in practicing sustainable agricultural methods to conserve and build healthy soils. We have been working closely with University of MD Extension Service and the Natural Resource Conservation Service of the USDA for more than three years to advance the cause of creating a Soil Conservation District in the city of Baltimore, which is the only jurisdiction in the entire state of Maryland that still lacks one. This District will support the growth of the ecosystem of sustainable urban agricultural operations in the city such as the ones in our membership network. Without a Soil Conservation District, our farms have faced additional barriers to financial viability such as lack of access to heavy equipment, lack of access to capital for the purpose of agricultural development, and a confusing regulatory landscape that sometimes results in unwarranted regulation of farming activities in the city simply because city agencies do not recognize the agricultural practices our farmers use. A Soil Conservation District staffed by experts in sustainable agriculture methods will be in a position to remove many of these barriers. Therefore, we are in support of this Senate Bill 0601 from Senator McCray, and we urge the committee to take a FAVORABLE position and advance this legislation.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mariya Strauss".

Mariya Strauss, Co-Executive Director
Farm Alliance of Baltimore
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