



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

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SB 437

DATE: March 9, 2022

SPONSOR: Senator McCray

ASSIGNED TO: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

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POSITION: Support (Montgomery County Office of Agriculture)

Agriculture – University of Maryland Extension – Urban Farmer Assistance

Senate Bill 437, *Agriculture – University of Maryland Extension – Urban Farmer Assistance*, would require the University of Maryland Extension to hire two extension agents. One agent will focus on urban farm production methods and crop management. The other will focus on urban farm and agribusiness management. Both will spend the majority of their time educating urban farmers. The bill also requires that funding be provided in the State budget to underwrite the costs associated with these two positions.

From small vacant lots to rooftops, alleyways, and parks to urban open spaces, opportunities exist in almost every community to create gardens that feed people, teach the importance of agriculture, improve nutrition, and enhance community life. Along with providing a much-needed source of healthy, locally-grown food, urban gardens provide a wide range of benefits, including soil, air, and water quality improvements, stormwater management, increased property values and aesthetics, and education and recreational opportunities for communities and schools.

The Montgomery County Office of Agriculture supports this legislation. The additional urban farming supports that would be enabled by Senate Bill 437 would be welcome and could help counties like Montgomery meet their goals to increase urban farming activity and to reduce food insecurity. Accordingly, the Office requests the Committee to act favorably on this legislation.