



March 2, 2022

Re: House Bill 1216 (Delegate Wells)

**Testimony in Support of House Bill 1216 (Urban Agriculture Grant Fund)
- Delegate Wells**

Dear Delegate Wells,

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 lead 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 support (with 3 requested amendments) of House Bill 1216 and your proposal to alter the purpose and contents of and the requirements and qualifications under the Urban Agriculture Grant Fund.

I am excited to see House Bill 1216's plans to expand statewide access to greatly needed financial support of the nascent yet beneficially diverse business sector that I work in.

In addition to the well-documented positive impacts on community health, education, and preservation, there are several case that display urban agriculture's economic viability. However, similar to its rural counterpart, the urban agriculture industry has risk & volatility (e.g. crop failure, natural disasters), as well as high barriers to entry (e.g lease/acquisition of land in urban areas, equipment, infrastructure). I believe that urban agriculture requires similar support to reach its full economic potential.

While I fully support the majority of the bill, I would like to note the following requested amendments:

1. **Page 4, line 28-29:** As an owner of the .25 acre urban lot that I farm on in Prince George's County and a follower of local real estate trends, I feel that securing space to operate in is the single biggest obstacle facing new urban farmers. *I believe that a 20% cap on the grant funds eligibility toward securing real property could be very restrictive, and that the cap should be increased and/or removed.*
2. **Page 6, line 4:** While there are several farm training or continuing education programs offered by well-established organizations, I do not believe that there are any that are USDA-certified. *Perhaps this requirement could be modified to include different or additional program certifications?*
3. **Page 6, lines 7-9:** While I understand the important of the community education component of urban agriculture, I believe that this requirement will inadvertently disqualify individuals with criminal records, and urban farmers who do not have business infrastructure (staff with youth education expertise, necessary insurance clearance, etc.) required to offer elementary student-

targeted education. *Perhaps this requirement could be removed or modified to be more inclusive to urban farmers and urban farm businesses?*

Thank you again for your efforts thus far in proposing this bill. I look forward to providing live testimony at the bill hearing on Friday 3/4. Please let me know how I can further support.

Best regards,

Doug Adams

Owner - New Brooklyn Farms, Benefit LLC

grow@newbrooklynfarms.com