

March 8, 2022

2022 SESSION SUPPORT TESTIMONY
SB0437 Agriculture – University of Maryland Extension – Urban Farmer Assistance

COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs
POSITION: Testimony of Support of Senate Bill 0437
BILL ANALYSIS: Hiring of two University of Maryland Extension agents focused on urban farmer support.
SIGNED: Maryland Food System Resiliency Council (FRSC)

I submit this written testimony on behalf of our Maryland Food System Resiliency Council (FRSC) members (33 appointed members) – not the government or the Governor’s office - in SUPPORT of SB0437. This legislation calls for the addition of two University of Maryland Extension agent positions focused on supporting local urban farmers via applied research and conducting crop and agribusiness management education to support farmers. This bill provides an annual of \$300,000 to University of Maryland Extension for the two agents hired.

The Food System Resiliency Council was established by the Maryland General Assembly in the 2021 legislative session to bring together 33 appointed council members from across the state, all with different points of entry and expertise to work toward a more resilient food system and address the food insecurity crisis due to COVID-19. One of the key mandates of this council was to develop a report by Nov. 1st 2021, detailing equity and sustainability policy recommendations to increase the long-term resiliency of the Maryland food system.

The FSRC report represents five months of intensive work and thought leadership on behalf of organizations, such as the state’s main two food banks, all the state’s food councils, leaders in anti-hunger advocacy, emergency food assistance providers, state administrators, emergency responders, food system experts, and universities.

The creation of two new University of Maryland Extension agent positions in SB0437 supports the recommendations in the FSRC report, which strives to expand education, facilities, and impact of organizations and individual businesses and farmers dedicated to improving the long-term resiliency and sustainability of the local Maryland food system. These two Extension agent positions will directly support urban farmers through both crop and agribusiness management, which will bolster the local food system. Passing SB0437 will strengthen the sustainability of the local food system by increasing the education and experience of Maryland urban farmers who directly supply our local urban communities, thereby, increasing our food system resiliency in our urban communities, where residents are most affected by food deserts and food insecurities.

Sincerely,



Heather Bruskin

Co-Chair, Maryland Food System Resiliency Council