

Support of SB 437 - Agriculture - University of Ma

Uploaded by: Colby Ferguson

Position: FAV



Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

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

March 9, 2022

To: Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

From: Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

Re: **Support of SB 437 - Agriculture - University of Maryland Extension - Urban Farmer Assistance**

On behalf of our member families, I submit this written testimony in support of SB 437. This bill requires the University of Maryland Extension to hire an extension agent dedicated to urban farm production methods and crop management and an extension agent dedicated to urban farm and agribusiness management. It requires the agents to perform applied research and provide education to urban farmers. Finally, the bill requires the Governor to annually include \$300,000 in the annual budget bill for the extension agents hired under the Act.

Technical assistance and education are needed in the urban agricultural sector as many new and beginning farmers don't understand the Food Safety Modernization Act requirements, the state's nutrient management plan requirements or the state, county and local health department standards. Increasing the number of extension staff dedicated to urban agriculture will assist with these education needs.

Maryland Farm Bureau Policy:

- We believe that the University of Maryland should establish a line item in their budget for funding the University of Maryland Extension and the Agricultural Experiment Stations. We urge increased funding for agricultural research and extension to bring a more equitable funding support and correct the disparity between these departments and the rest of the University.
- 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.

MARYLAND FARM BUREAU SUPPORTS SB 437 AND REQUEST A FAVORABLE REPORT

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Colby Ferguson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Colby Ferguson
Director of Government Relations

For more information contact Colby Ferguson at (240) 578-0396

SB 437 Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Cory McCray

Position: FAV

CORY V. MCCRAY
Legislative District 45
Baltimore City

DEPUTY MAJORITY WHIP

Budget and Taxation Committee

Subcommittees

Vice Chair, Capital Budget

Pensions

Chair, Public Safety, Transportation,
and Environment



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 9, 2022

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 437
Agriculture – University of Maryland Extension – Urban Farmer Assistance

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the
and Environmental Affairs Committee:

Education, Health,

As sponsor of Senate Bill 437, I urge the Committee's support. This bill will ensure that the University of Maryland Extension includes two statewide extension agents dedicated to providing technical assistance and training for urban farmers. The agents will specialize in production methods and crop management, and urban farm and agribusiness management.

The University of Maryland Extension is a premier source of research and education for Maryland farmers; additional specialized Extension agents will support a growing number of urban farmers.

The University of Maryland Extension supports research and education needs for Maryland farmers through local agents and several statewide posts. These statewide posts include staff who specialize in various areas, but not urban farming. One agent with particular expertise in urban farming is the Baltimore City local agent. As a result, this agent's time can sometimes be divided between serving Baltimore City urban farmers and seeking to assist farmers and farm service providers in other areas of the State. This legislation will dedicate two new statewide Extension agents to urban agriculture, serving as a force multiplier for Baltimore's local Extension agent and supporting urban farmers statewide.

The University Extension reports that at least 40 urban farms that sell at least part of what they produce currently exist in Maryland, representing a wide variety of for-profit and not-for-profit business models, missions, and income levels. A 2020 survey of urban growers found that urban farms across the Northeast US have a wide range of staffing numbers, with most respondents reporting between 1 and 12 full-time staff, 1 to 12 part-time staff, 1 to 6 volunteers, and 1 to 6 interns or apprentices.¹ In both the 2019 survey of MD urban growers and the 2020 survey of Northeast urban growers, the majority of urban farmers produce diversified vegetables, fruits, and specialty crops, and the majority earned a gross income of less than \$10,000. Specialty crop production and business management were cited among the top educational needs of urban farmers in both surveys.

Urban farming may help preserve green space in developed areas, filter water, and improve air quality.

The agriculture sector accounts for nearly one third of global greenhouse gas emissions and is the largest source of non-

¹ Richardson, M., Thompson, M.J., Carson, A.D., Taylor, J.R., Rangarajan, A. VanVranken, R., Hanumappa, M. Little, N.G. (unpublished data) *A profile of urban agricultural growers, organizations, their needs, and differences based on profit status in the northeastern United States.*

point source pollution entering the Chesapeake Bay. The use of property within developed areas for agriculture may help improve local water quality and local air quality. If successful, the continued growth of urban farms may help grow a network of green spaces within developed areas of Maryland.

Urban farming may help reverse historic inequities that persist in various ways.

Redlining and a history of segregation and oppression have created inequities that continue today in many ways. Urban farming can increase access for low-income and communities of color to healthy, fresh, local food sources. It can also promote business start-ups and property ownership.

The Centers for a Livable Future’s *Baltimore City’s Food Environment Report: 2018 Report* includes findings that in Baltimore, about 23.5 percent of residents live in Healthy Food Priority Areas, and black residents are the most likely of any racial or ethnic group to live in a Priority Area (31.5 percent).² The report also features urban agriculture along with nutritional assistance programs to highlight additional points of access to healthy food. This legislation will further the State’s interest in providing equitable access to healthy food by supporting the growth of food in urban census blocks that may be sold locally through community-supported agriculture networks and farmers markets or provided to food banks.

The 2017 report *Business Disparities in the Maryland Market Area*, prepared for the State of Maryland and the Maryland Department of Transportation, states that “For African Americans, business formation rates are 4.5 percentage points lower than what would be expected in a race- and gender-neutral market area.”³ The bill will help promote business ownership by people of color by targeting support for beginning farmers interested in working in urban areas and teaching about land acquisition.

The University of Maryland Extension should provide needed training and technical assistance for urban farmers as they provide for other farmers.

Farm service providers and farmers throughout Maryland name training and technical assistance as critical hurdles for beginning urban farmers and impediments to growing the urban farming industry. This legislation will directly address the needs noted by urban farmers through the responsibilities of new Extension agents – one focused on production methods and crop management and the other focused on urban farm and agribusiness management.

The Agent focused on production methods and crop management will provide education on areas including:

1. Planning and scheduling crop planting and harvesting in urban areas, including outdoors, indoors, in greenhouses, and in high tunnel production systems;
2. Production management practices for controlled environment agriculture systems;
3. Growing trials and production methods for crops grown in urban areas, including specialty crops such as heritage vegetables, ethnic vegetables, herbs, microgreens, and cut flowers;
4. Propagation and transplant production;
5. Training on and certifications for good agricultural practices; and
6. Training on organic certification.

The Agent dedicated to urban farm agribusiness management will provide education on areas including:

1. Accounting and financial management;
2. Identifying potential customers and business development;
3. Marketing;
4. Human resource management;
5. Different business types and structures;
6. Land acquisition;
7. Insurance; and

² [Report: ‘Food Desert’ Gets a Name Change in Response to Baltimore Community Feedback](#), Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, January 17, 2018.

³ [Business Disparities in the Maryland Market Area: Prepared for the State of Maryland and the Maryland Department of Transportation](#), NERA Economic Consulting, Section 2. Findings: Race and Gender Disparities in Business Formation, page 150, February 8, 2017.

8. Licensing and permitting;

Both agents will perform applied research while spending a majority of their time providing education directly to urban farmers. In future years, the agents may change their offerings to adapt to the needs of Maryland's farmers. According to the legislation, they will provide additional training and technical assistance according to the interests and needs identified through consultation with urban farmers. Urban farmers throughout Maryland will be the drivers of new offerings and assistance from the University Extension Agents.

For these reasons, I respectfully request the Committee submit a FAVORABLE report on SB 437.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Cory V. McCray".

Cory V. McCray

State Senator, 45th District

SB 437 UMD Testimony-CB.pdf

Uploaded by: Craig Beyrouthy

Position: FAV



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Office of the Dean and Director

Agricultural Experiment Station

University of Maryland Extension

1296 Symons Hall
College Park, Maryland 20742-5551
301.405.2072 TEL
301.314.9146 FAX

Testimony before the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
SB 437 Agriculture - University of Maryland Extension - Urban Farmer Assistance
March 9, 2022
Favorable

Mister Chair and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for considering the important issue of expanding support for urban agriculture. For over 100 years, University of Maryland Extension has provided education and assistance to the state of Maryland and its people in the areas of agriculture, youth development, public health, and environmental responsibility, and we strive to continue that long-standing tradition. Our expert faculty and support staff engaged over 400,000 residents last year, delivering programs in person and online, serving all 23 counties and Baltimore City. As Dean of the University of Maryland's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, I wanted to share information and my excitement with you about expanding our impact in urban agriculture.

Urban agriculture in Maryland

In a 2018 University of Maryland (UMD) Extension survey, Maryland urban farmers indicated the majority of them grow vegetables, fruits, and cut flowers in land-based production systems using raised-beds, in-ground growing, and high tunnels. They balance numerous goals, including producing food for themselves and their communities, creating jobs, and providing income for their families. Urban farmers reported barriers to success such as access to financial services, land or buildings, labor, water, and marketing assistance. In addition, they had difficulty navigating local policies and bureaucracy, and finding product price points realistic for the community and profitable for the farmer (Little et al. 2019). In a 2020 survey of Northeast US urban growers, sustainable pest management, urban soil management, and specialty crop production were the most requested training topics. Respondents rated Extension as a relevant resource and wanted more access to Extension support (Richardson et al. unpublished data).

Benefits of urban agriculture

Urban agriculture offers important advantages to the community such as access to fresh, locally-grown produce, hands-on STEM education opportunities for children, community connection with food production, and local control of a portion of the food supply.

Expansion of urban agriculture technical support

UMD Extension is uniquely positioned to serve urban farmers. Our mission is to conduct applied research and provide research-based educational programming to increase producer profitability while conserving resources by using cutting-edge technologies and

practices. The UMD Extension Agriculture and Food Systems (AgFS) Program has one urban agriculture educator located in Baltimore City; urban farmers consider her a phenomenal resource for their operations. Extension is a trusted information source. Urban farmer participants in AgFS Extension classes and workshops reported they will change their farming practices based on what they learned. On average, participants reported that programs increased their likelihood to have soil tested (80%), use integrated pest management (75%), and write a farm business plan (82%). Technical assistance clients reported that 100% of them will take action based on the information received, with 40% reporting the information will help them improve their business. After coaching sessions, 92% of participants reported it helped them identify next steps for their businesses.

Impact of the proposed bill on UMD Extension

The proposed SB437 would expand UMD Extension's ability to support Maryland urban farmers by providing funding to hire two additional full-time Extension faculty dedicated to conducting applied research, delivering educational programming, and providing technical assistance to urban farmers. Urban farmers identified two areas of needed expertise: (1) controlled-environment and urban agriculture production methods and (2) farm and agribusiness management. These UME educators would build relationships with urban farmers across Maryland and expand urban agriculture research and education programming to address the aforementioned barriers urban farmers consider important.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I urge a favorable report on SB437.

Sincerely,



Craig Beyrouthy, Dean and Director
College of Agriculture and Natural Resources
University of Maryland, College Park

References

- Little, N. G., McCoy, T., Wang, C., & Dill, S. P. (2019). Results of a needs assessment of urban farmers in Maryland. *Journal of the National Association of County Agricultural Agents*, 12(1), 1–8. <https://www.nacaa.com/journal/452eeb58-36c3-44ac-978d-f2999c49ddb9>
- Little, N. (2021). What is urban agriculture? University of Maryland Extension Factsheet 1169 <https://extension.umd.edu/resource/what-urban-agriculture>
- Richardson, M., Thompson, M.J., Carson, A.D., Taylor, J.R., Rangarajan, A. VanVranken, R., Hanumappa, M. Little, N.G. (unpublished data) A profile of urban agricultural growers, organizations, their needs, and differences based on profit status in the northeastern United States.

SB437 - UMD Extension - Urban Farmer Assistance -

Uploaded by: Dakota Matthews

Position: FAV



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Charlotte Davis, Executive Director

John Hartline, Chair

Testimony in Support of
Senate Bill 437 - Agriculture - University of Maryland Extension - Urban Farmer Assistance
Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
March 09, 2022

The Rural Maryland Council supports Senate Bill 437- Agriculture - University of Maryland Extension - Urban Farmer Assistance. This bill will help grow and enhance Maryland's urban agriculture by hiring an extension agent dedicated to urban farm production methods and crop management, and another extension agent dedicated to urban farm and agribusiness management. These agents will help farmers by educating them on the best practices to operate a successful urban farm. Building a stronger urban agriculture in Maryland will also help grow the State's urban communities.

Urban agriculture has been most concisely defined by Wagstaff and Wortman (2013) as "all forms of agricultural production (food and non-food products) occurring within or around cities." This definition includes all production in or near cities of plants or animals, whether for personal use or for sale, whether soil based or hydroponic production. While most of Maryland's food production lies in rural areas (north-central portion of the State and upper eastern shore), there are a multitude of urban farms located in the State's urban areas-Baltimore City alone has approximately 20 thriving urban farms.

Access and availability to food has an impact on health, culture, and quality of life and resources. In the United States, healthy food is difficult to access for nearly 24 million people who live in areas without a grocery store. Recent reports from *Preventative Medicine and Education for Health* show that low-income neighborhoods have 25% fewer grocery stores than middle and high-income neighborhoods. This disparity contributes to higher rates of diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease. The growth of Maryland's urban agriculture enables healthier communities, food diversity, accessible markets, job opportunities, and builds a sense of ownership and well-being through agricultural related activity in urban areas.

The RMC looks for strategic partnerships to bridge rural and urban communities. The agriculture sector can help bridge the gap between these two communities. The Rural Maryland Council respectfully requests your favorable support of Senate Bill 437.

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) is an independent state agency governed by a nonpartisan, 40-member board that consists of inclusive representation from the federal, state, regional, county and municipal governments, as well as the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. We bring together federal, state, county and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to identify challenges unique to rural communities and to craft public policy, programmatic or regulatory solutions.

"A Collective Voice for Rural Maryland"

SB 437_Urban Ag Extension Agents.Sign.on SUPPORT.p

Uploaded by: David Tana

Position: FAV



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION
Saving a National Treasure



COLLEGE OF
AGRICULTURE &
NATURAL RESOURCES

Senate Bill 437

Agriculture – University of Maryland Extension – Urban Farmer Assistance

Date: March 9, 2022

To: Education, Health, Environmental Affairs

Position: **Support**

From: Kristen Harbeson, Political Director

League of Conservation Voters

Robin Clark, Maryland Staff Attorney

Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Nancy Nunn, Assistant Director

Harry R. Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the Maryland League of Conservation Voters, and the Howard R. Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology of the University of Maryland College of Agriculture & Natural Resources **SUPPORT** Senate Bill 437, which will ensure that the University of Maryland Extension includes two statewide extension agents dedicated to providing technical assistance and training for urban farmers. The agents will specialize in production methods and crop management, and urban farm and agribusiness management.

Urban farming may help preserve green space in developed areas, filter water, and improve air quality.

The agriculture sector accounts for nearly one third of global greenhouse gas emissions and is the largest source of non-point source pollution entering the Chesapeake Bay. The use of property within developed areas for agriculture may help improve local water quality and local air quality. If successful, the continued growth of urban farms may help grow a network of green spaces within developed areas of Maryland.

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¹ [Report: 'Food Desert' Gets a Name Change in Response to Baltimore Community Feedback](#), Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, January 17, 2018.

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6. Land acquisition;
7. Insurance; and
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Both agents will perform applied research while spending a majority of their time providing education directly to urban farmers. In future years, the agents may change their offerings to adapt to the needs of Maryland’s farmers. According to the legislation, they will provide additional training and technical assistance according to the interests and needs identified through consultation with urban farmers. Urban farmers throughout Maryland will be the drivers of new offerings and assistance from the University Extension Agents.

For these reasons, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the Maryland League of Conservation Voters, and the Howard R. Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology urge the Committee’s FAVORABLE report on SB 437.

² [Business Disparities in the Maryland Market Area: Prepared for the State of Maryland and the Maryland Department of Transportation](#), NERA Economic Consulting, Section 2. Findings: Race and Gender Disparities in Business Formation, page 150, February 8, 2017.

Sb437_CleanWaterAction_Fav.pdf

Uploaded by: Emily Ranson

Position: FAV

SB437 - Agriculture – University of Maryland Extension – Urban Farmer Assistance

Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee

March 9, 2022

Position: Favorable

Dear Chair Pinsky and Members of the Committee,

Clean Water Action supports SB437 to require two statewide extension agents dedicated to providing technical assistance and training for urban farmers. Specifically, these agents will specialize in production methods and crop management, and urban farm and agribusiness management.

The University of Maryland Extension is a fantastic resource for farmers. SB437 seeks to expand this resource to also provide expertise on the unique challenges that urban farmers face - especially licensing and permitting and the use of indoor and space-constrained areas, based on identified-needs from urban farmers themselves.

Providing this technical assistance to farmers facing these unique challenges will help incorporate our food system into our built up environments, allowing food to be grown and sold locally and enabling more people to pursue their path in one of Maryland's most significant industries.

Thank you and we ask for a favorable report.

Emily Ranson
Clean Water Action
eranson@cleanwater.org

SB437_FAV_MD Food System Resiliency Council.docx.p

Uploaded by: Heather Bruskin

Position: FAV

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

Heidarian_Fair_Farms_SB_437_Testimony_Favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: Humon Heidarian

Position: FAV



March 08, 2021
The Honorable Paul G. Pinsky
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee
Maryland House of Delegates
91 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401-1904

SB 437- Agriculture - University of Maryland Extension - Urban Farmer Assistance
Senator Cory McCray

Position: Favorable

Dear Chairman Pinsky,

The Fair Farms Campaign asks for a favorable report of this bill. Fair Farms is a program of Waterkeepers Chesapeake which works with local farmers that grow sustainably to create policies that would benefit them. We are a campaign with over 150 partners, including farmers, urban and rural, advocates, and business owners.

Historically, U.S. institutions viewed urban agriculture as a hobby—it is not. The COVID-19 Pandemic made it clear that urban farms proved to be more resilient and helped to feed communities healthy food¹. It is a viable business and food production model that can provide jobs and financial support in the local economy².

This bill is part of the solution to support urban agriculture at the institutional level. The University of Maryland Extension already provides excellent educational and research support to farmers across the state. Urban farmers should have access to the same resources as their rural counterparts. Without the proper education and research support, urban agriculture will not progress. Maryland has been an innovator in the agricultural sector for many years. Funding two new positions at UMD Extension will galvanize innovations in this field and support urban farming businesses.

We respectfully ask for a favorable report on SB 437. Thank you to Senator McCray, his office, and the other stakeholders who drafted this legislation. We hope to work with the Senator on issues related to agriculture and food equity in the future.

Sincerely,

Humon Heidarian
humon@fairfarmsnow.org
Campaign Manager, Fair Farms
Waterkeepers Chesapeake



1 Schoen V, Blythe C, Caputo S, Fox-Kämper R, Specht K, Fargue-Lelièvre A, Cohen N, Ponizy Land Feden' czak K (2021) "We Have Been Part of the Response": The Effects of COVID-19 on Community and Allotment Gardens in the Global North. *Front. Sustain. Food Syst.* 5:732641.doi: 10.3389/fsufs.2021.732641

2 A Tool for Creating Economic Development and Healthy Communities in Prince George's County, MD, *The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission.*

SB437_MDSierraClub_fav 9Mar2022.pdf

Uploaded by: Josh Tulkin

Position: FAV



P.O. Box 278
Riverdale, MD 20738

Committee: Appropriations

Testimony on: SB 437 “Agriculture – University of Maryland Extension – Urban Farmer Assistance”

Position: Support

Hearing Date: March 9, 2022

The Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club recommends support for SB 437. This legislation will require the University of Maryland (UMD) Extension Program to hire two extension agents dedicated to urban farming and require that the budget submitted by the Governor include \$300,000 for the UMD Extension Program to fund these agents.

The agents hired under this act will be responsible for assisting urban farmers by three main methods:

- 1) The monitoring of urban farm production methods, the agribusiness management of such farms, and urban farm crop management
- 2) Providing educational outreach to urban farmers in Maryland teaching the skills necessary to establish and manage an economically viable and ecologically sustainable urban agricultural operation
- 3) Performing applied research within and throughout all urban farming facets of the UMD Extension Program

The practice of urban farming brings many environmental, economic, and social benefits to the communities that host such farms and to the areas that surround them, including an increase in air quality, the reduction of food transport costs, and the reduction of rainwater runoff. As the number of urban farms increases in Maryland, it is crucial that the UMD Extension Program be equipped with agents oriented to the principles of sustainable urban agriculture that characterize the UMD Extension Program and be able to apply current agroecological research to the everyday practices of urban farm management. SB 437 would ensure the employment of agents by the UMD Extension Program capable of fulfilling both of these requirements.

The interest in urban farming in Maryland is a testament to our state valuing the physical health of its people and environmental conservation of our lands. It is important that the UMD Extension Program be able to meet the needs of our urban farmers by having the annual budget necessary to hire agents focused on urban agriculture. We ask for a favorable report.

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

Josh Tulkin
Chapter Director
Josh.Tulkin@MDSierra.org

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America’s oldest and largest 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.

SB 437 - MoCo_Wenger_FAV (GA 22).pdf

Uploaded by: Melanie Wenger

Position: FAV



Montgomery County

Office of Intergovernmental Relations

ROCKVILLE: 240-777-6550

ANNAPOLIS: 240-777-8270

SB 437

DATE: March 9, 2022

SPONSOR: Senator McCray

ASSIGNED TO: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

CONTACT PERSON: Melanie Wenger (melanie.wenger@montgomerycountymd.gov)

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.

SB 437_Prince Georges Co Exec_Favorable.pdf

Uploaded by: Prince George's County Maryland

Position: FAV



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL: SB 437 – University of Maryland Extension - Urban Farmer Assistance

SPONSOR: Senator McCray

HEARING DATE: In the Senate - Hearing 3/09 at 1:00 p.m.

COMMITTEE: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **supports** SB 437 – University of Maryland Extension - Urban Farmer Assistance, which will fund two additional University of Maryland Extension agents solely dedicated to assisting urban farmers in the state, especially in the content areas of farm business management and crop production.

Since our Prince George's County Council passed several pieces of key urban farming legislation between 2015 and 2019, our County has worked with UMD Extension's Urban Agriculture Educator (agent) through our local Extension office and our Soil Conservation District to support urban farmers in Prince George's County. Almost 80% of Prince George's County is zoned for urban farming, and for a myriad of potential benefits related to food security, economic development, and environmental and community health, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive and stakeholders are striving to incentivize this growing industry in the County. Two recent county reports – the Food Security Task Force Recommendations and Climate Action Plan – reference the importance of expanding urban agriculture as a strategy to support the county's resilience to climate change and food insecurity. Prince George's County has the highest food insecurity rate in the region, and food insecurity disproportionately impacted low-income, Black, and Latinx residents and increased from 14.3 percent to over 17 percent during the pandemic.

In 2018, the County funded an Urban Agricultural Conservation Planner to support urban farmers with Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans and the Urban Agricultural Property Tax Credit. Currently, in addition to conservation planning, our Urban Ag Conservation Planner is triaging non-soil and water conservation related questions from urban farmers that are better suited to the expertise of an

Extension agent. It would be more efficient and effective for the Planner to connect farmers with an Extension agent conducting specialized research and programming in a content area that aligns with the farmers' needs and interests. While we are appreciative of the support that we have received from the UMD Extension Urban Agriculture Educator, primarily her time and responsibilities are devoted to urban farming efforts in Baltimore City. This bill has the potential to expand UMD Extension's Urban Ag Program to reach more urban farmers and better serve urban farmers in Prince George's County.

Currently, our Soil Conservation District is working with 33 cooperators to develop Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans. In addition, the District has engaged an additional 40 urban farmers interested in launching enterprises in the County, providing them with resources related to navigating regulations, business planning, crop management practices, the County's Urban Ag Property Tax Credit, and monthly training and networking opportunities. Our Soil Conservation District is partnering with Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission, ECO City Farms, and the Prince George's Food Equity Council to launch an 11-acre urban farm incubator at Watkins Regional Park. This project has received funding from both federal and non-profit partners and stands to be a national model and flagship program for the County. To best serve urban farmers participating in the incubator project, technical assistance from UMD Extension agents with cutting-edge expertise in urban agriculture business development and crop management and planning is crucial. Our County would welcome any opportunity to work with additional Extension agents and looks forward to providing input on what research and programming efforts would best suit our Prince George's County constituents engaged in urban agriculture.

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive supports SB 437 – University of Maryland Extension - Urban Farmer Assistance and asks for a favorable report.

SB 437_CBF and Partners SUPPORT.pdf

Uploaded by: Robin Jessica Clark

Position: FAV



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION
Saving a National Treasure



COLLEGE OF
AGRICULTURE &
NATURAL RESOURCES

Senate Bill 437

Agriculture – University of Maryland Extension – Urban Farmer Assistance

Date: March 9, 2022 Position: **Support**
To: From:
Education, Health, and Robin Clark, Maryland Staff Attorney, Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Environmental Affairs Kristen Harbeson, Political Director, League of Conservation Voters
 Nancy Nunn, Assistant Director, Harry R. Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the Maryland League of Conservation Voters, and the Howard R. Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology of the University of Maryland College of Agriculture & Natural Resources **SUPPORT** Senate Bill 437, which will ensure that the University of Maryland Extension includes two statewide extension agents dedicated to providing technical assistance and training for urban farmers. The agents will specialize in production methods and crop management, and urban farm and agribusiness management.

Urban farming may help preserve green space in developed areas, filter water, and improve air quality.

The agriculture sector accounts for nearly one third of global greenhouse gas emissions and is the largest source of non-point source pollution entering the Chesapeake Bay. The use of property within developed areas for agriculture may help improve local water quality and local air quality. If successful, the continued growth of urban farms may help grow a network of green spaces within developed areas of Maryland.

Urban farming may help reverse historic inequities that persist in various ways.

Redlining and a history of segregation and oppression have created inequities that continue today in many ways. Urban farming can increase access for low-income and communities of color to healthy, fresh, local food sources. It can also promote business start-ups and property ownership.

The Centers for a Livable Future's **Baltimore City's Food Environment Report: 2018 Report** includes findings that in Baltimore, about 23.5 percent of residents live in Healthy Food Priority Areas, and black residents are the most likely of any racial or ethnic group to live in a Priority Area (31.5 percent).¹ The report also features urban agriculture along with nutritional assistance programs to highlight additional points of access to healthy food. This legislation will further the State's interest in providing equitable access to healthy food by supporting the growth of food in urban census blocks that may be sold locally through community-supported agriculture networks and farmers markets or provided to food banks.

The 2017 report **Business Disparities in the Maryland Market Area**, prepared for the State of Maryland and the Maryland Department of Transportation, states that "For African Americans, business formation rates are 4.5 percentage points lower than what would be expected in a race- and gender-neutral market

¹ [Report: 'Food Desert' Gets a Name Change in Response to Baltimore Community Feedback](#), Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, January 17, 2018.

area.”² The bill will help promote business ownership by people of color by targeting support for beginning farmers interested in working in urban areas and teaching about land acquisition.

The University of Maryland Extension should provide needed training and technical assistance for urban farmers as they provide for other farmers.

Farm service providers and farmers throughout Maryland name training and technical assistance as critical hurdles for beginning urban farmers and impediments to growing the urban farming industry. This legislation will directly address the needs noted by urban farmers through the responsibilities of new Extension agents – one focused on production methods and crop management and the other focused on urban farm and agribusiness management.

The Agent focused on production methods and crop management will provide education on areas including:

1. Planning and scheduling crop planting and harvesting in urban areas, including outdoors, indoors, in greenhouses, and in high tunnel production systems;
2. Production management practices for controlled environment agriculture systems;
3. Growing trials and production methods for crops grown in urban areas, including specialty crops such as heritage vegetables, ethnic vegetables, herbs, microgreens, and cut flowers;
4. Propagation and transplant production;
5. Training on and certifications for good agricultural practices; and
6. Training on organic certification.

The Agent dedicated to urban farm agribusiness management will provide education on areas including:

1. Accounting and financial management;
2. Identifying potential customers and business development;
3. Marketing;
4. Human resource management;
5. Different business types and structures;
6. Land acquisition;
7. Insurance; and
8. Licensing and permitting;

Both agents will perform applied research while spending a majority of their time providing education directly to urban farmers. In future years, the agents may change their offerings to adapt to the needs of Maryland’s farmers. According to the legislation, they will provide additional training and technical assistance according to the interests and needs identified through consultation with urban farmers. Urban farmers throughout Maryland will be the drivers of new offerings and assistance from the University Extension Agents.

For these reasons, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the Maryland League of Conservation Voters, and the Howard R. Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology urge the Committee’s FAVORABLE report on SB 437.

² [Business Disparities in the Maryland Market Area: Prepared for the State of Maryland and the Maryland Department of Transportation](#), NERA Economic Consulting, Section 2. Findings: Race and Gender Disparities in Business Formation, page 150, February 8, 2017.

SB 437 Testimony MARBIDCO.pdf

Uploaded by: Steve McHenry

Position: FAV



MARBIDCO
growing rural ventures™

MARYLAND AGRICULTURAL AND RESOURCE-BASED
INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
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www.marbidco.org

Mary Shank Creek, *Chair* / Stephen R. McHenry, *Executive Director*

TESTIMONY STATEMENT

BILL: Senate Bill 437 (Agriculture – University of Maryland Extension – Urban Farmer Assistance)

COMMITTEE: Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs

DATE: March 9, 2022

POSITION: Support

The Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO) supports Senate Bill 437, which requires the University of Maryland Extension to hire two extension agents dedicated to promoting urban farming. The extension agents will perform applied research and provide technical assistance and training related to urban crop production methods and agribusiness management for urban farmers. The bill also requires the Governor to annually include \$300,000 in the budget for the extension agents hired.

MARBIDCO has been co-leading efforts in recent months to develop supportive urban agriculture policy recommendations and has helped to facilitate several meetings with a variety of stakeholders around the State including the participation of urban farmers and agricultural service providers from State and local government agencies, University of Maryland Extension, conservation organizations, Farm Credit, local land trusts, and county soil conservation districts. Senate Bill 437 is an outcome from these discussions.

Bill Summary

Farm service providers and farmers throughout Maryland name training and technical assistance as critical hurdles for beginning urban farmers and impediments to growing the urban farming industry. House Bill 540 will directly address the needs noted by urban farmers through the responsibilities of the new Extension agents – one focused on production methods and crop management and the other focused on urban farm and agribusiness management.

The production methods and crop management Agent will provide education on areas including: planning and scheduling crop planting and harvesting in urban areas, including outdoors, indoors, in greenhouses, and in high tunnel production systems; production management practices for controlled environment agriculture systems; growing trials and production methods for crops grown in urban areas, including specialty crops such as heritage vegetables, ethnic vegetables, herbs, microgreens, and cut flowers; propagation and transplant production; training on and certifications for good agricultural practices; and training on organic certification.

The Agent dedicated to urban farm and agribusiness management will provide education on areas including: accounting and financial management; identifying potential customers and business development; marketing; human resource management; different business types and structures; land acquisition; insurance; and licensing and permitting.

Additional Background Information

MARBIDCO supports the growth of commercial urban farming in Maryland because it helps preserve green space within developed areas and can provide access to healthy food to residents that live in Healthy Food Priority Areas (formally called food deserts). According to a recent study, 146,000 Baltimore City residents (23.5%) live in Healthy Food Priority Areas. Children and black residents are also disproportionately affected. According to the report, children are the most likely of any age group to live in a Healthy Food Priority Area (28.3%) and black residents are the most likely of any racial or ethnic group to live in a Healthy Food Priority Area (31.5%).¹ Urban farming can provide another access point for healthy fresh food, as urban farmers often sell their product in the local community. Urban farms also may provide community benefits such as education and job training opportunities. And they can be the community focal point of a neighborhood.

MARBIDCO has also been supporting commercial urban farming through some of its existing loan and grant programs. MARBDIDCO currently offers the Maryland Urban Agriculture Commercial Lending Incentive Grant Program, which provides a grant incentive up to \$10,000 to encourage urban farmers to seek commercial lender financing for the development or expansion of their agricultural enterprises. The grant can provide the equity capital needed to qualify for the loan through the commercial lender.

MARBIDCO also offers grants of \$1,000 to any small farmer that completes Level 2 or Level 3 of Future Harvest's Beginner Farmer Training Program (including urban farmers). This summer MARBIDCO will also be providing grants of up to \$1,000 for cold storage equipment purchases (with 30% of the available funding set aside specifically for urban farmers). MARBIDCO has also financed a farm real estate purchase in Baltimore City (with a secured loan partnering with a commercial lender) and is currently exploring the development of an urban farmer land access program working in conjunction with local land trusts.

In conclusion, MARBIDCO supports the growth of commercial urban farming in Maryland. Urban agriculture offers increased access to healthy, fresh, culturally appropriate food while also creating job opportunities and helping to support local economies. Urban agriculture also helps to preserve greenspaces in urban areas which is good for the quality of life and reduces the distance that food must travel to market. House Bill 540 supports the growth of urban agriculture by providing research and technical training identified by urban farmers as critical hurdles to their growth.

As such, MARBIDCO respectfully requests a Favorable Report for Senate Bill 437.

MARBIDCO Contact: Steve McHenry, 410.267.6807

MARBIDCO was established by the Maryland General Assembly 15 years ago to help enhance the sustainability and profitability of the State's agricultural and resource-based industries to help bolster rural economies, support locally produced food and fiber products, and preserve working farm and forest land. MARBIDCO is a nimble, quasi-public financial intermediary organization which has a mission to serve exclusively the commercial farming, forestry, and seafood industries of Maryland. Assisting young and beginning farmers are a special focus for MARBIDCO, as is farm operation diversification (through value added processing activities). Commercial urban farming has also become a focus of MARBIDCO's efforts.

In delivering its financing programs, MARBIDCO works cooperatively with commercial banks and farm credit associations, as well as a host of federal, State, regional and local government agencies, and universities. Since 2007, MARBIDCO has approved 1056 financings totaling nearly \$80 million for food and fiber business projects located in of all Maryland's counties (including Baltimore City) – and in the process has leveraged more than \$170 million in commercial lender financing. For more information about MARBIDCO's programs, please visit: www.marbidco.org.

¹ [*Report: 'Food Desert' Gets a Name Change in Response to Baltimore Community Feedback*](#), Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, January 17, 2018.

SB 437 Agriculture.University of Maryland Extensio

Uploaded by: Steven Darcey

Position: FAV

TO: Senate Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee

FROM: Steven Darcey, CPESC Executive Director Prince George's Soil Conservation District

RE: Senate Bill 437 Agriculture-University of Maryland Extension- Urban Farmer Assistance

DATE: March 9, 2022

POSITION: SUPPORT

On behalf of the Prince George's Soil Conservation District Board of Supervisors, we support Senate Bill 437. There is a tremendous need to provide additional guidance and expertise to the growing number of urban, peri-urban and community producers across the State. The addition of two statewide University of Maryland (UMD) Extension agents, that would be solely focused on urban agriculture would help that cause.

Extension has a long history of providing top quality guidance to farmers throughout Maryland. Today, the need is greater than ever as this new version of agriculture grows. To best serve urban farmers, technical assistance from Extension agents with cutting-edge expertise in the latest research, urban agriculture business development, crop management and planning is crucial.

This growing land use has potential for a myriad of benefits related to food security, economic development, environmental stewardship, and community health.

As we strive to support this growing industry, our Soil Conservation District staff has worked closely with the UMD Extension Urban Agriculture Educator that supports Baltimore City urban farming programs. Two recent county reports, the Food Security Task Force Recommendations, and the Climate Action Plan, both reference the importance of expanding urban agriculture as a strategy to support the county's resilience to climate change and food insecurity. Unfortunately, food insecurity disproportionately impacts low-income, Black, and Latinx populations.

The Soil Conservation District's Urban Ag Conservation program supports urban farmers with the development of Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans. Currently, in addition to conservation planning that addresses soil and water conservation issues, our Urban Ag Conservation Planner is triaging non-soil and water conservation related questions that are better suited to the expertise of an Extension agent. It would be more efficient and effective for the Soil Conservation District Planner to connect farmers with an Extension agent that is conducting specialized research and programming in a content area that aligns with the farmers' needs and interests.

Our Soil Conservation District is partnering with local state federal and private partners to develop an "Incubator Farm" in central Prince George's County. This facility will train aspiring urban producers on the basics of farming. We hope this will be a national model for others to emulate. We would welcome any opportunity to work with additional Extension agents and look forward to providing input on what research and programming efforts would best suit our Prince George's County constituents engaged in urban agriculture.

For the reasons stated above, the Prince George's Soil Conservation District supports SB0437 – University of Maryland Extension - Urban Farmer Assistance and asks for a favorable report.

SB 437 Agriculture.University of Maryland Extensio

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For the reasons stated above, the Prince George's Soil Conservation District supports SB0437 – University of Maryland Extension - Urban Farmer Assistance and asks for a favorable report.

SB 437 U of MD Extension-Urban Farmer Assitance (M

Uploaded by: Barbara Wilkins

Position: INFO



Maryland

DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET
AND MANAGEMENT

LARRY HOGAN
Governor

BOYD K. RUTHERFORD
Lieutenant Governor

DAVID R. BRINKLEY
Secretary

MARC L. NICOLE
Deputy Secretary

SENATE BILL 437 Agriculture – University of Maryland Extension – Urban Farmer Assistance (McCray)

STATEMENT OF INFORMATION

DATE: March 9, 2022

COMMITTEE: Senate Education, Health & Environmental Affairs

SUMMARY OF BILL: SB 437 mandates an annual appropriation in the amount of \$300,000 to fund two University of Maryland Extension (UME) agents: one agent dedicated to urban farm production and crop management and the second agent dedicated to urban farm and agribusiness management.

EXPLANATION: The Department of Budget and Management's focus is not on the underlying policy proposal being advanced by the legislation, but rather on the \$300,000 mandated appropriation provision that impacts the FY 2024 and subsequent budgets. The University System of Maryland has autonomy to create and eliminate positions.

DBM has the responsibility of submitting a balanced budget to the General Assembly annually, which will require spending allocations for FY 2024 to be within the official revenues estimates approved by the Board of Revenue Estimates in December 2022.

Changes to the Maryland Constitution in 2020 provide the General Assembly with additional budgetary authority, beginning in the 2023 Session, to realign total spending by increasing and adding items to appropriations in the budget submitted by the Governor. The legislature's new budgetary power diminishes, if not negates, the need for mandated appropriation bills.

Fully funding the implementation of the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (Kirwan) will require fiscal discipline in the years ahead, if the State is to maintain the current projected structural budget surpluses. Mandated spending increases need to be reevaluated within the context of this education funding priority and the Governor's tax relief proposals.

Economic conditions remain precarious as a result of COVID-19. High rates of inflation and workforce shortages may be short lived or persist, thereby impacting the Maryland economy. While current budget forecasts project structural surpluses, the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic continues to present a significant budgetary vulnerability. The Department continues to urge the General Assembly to focus on maintaining the structural budget surplus.

**For additional information, contact Barbara Wilkins at (410) 260-6371
or barbara.wilkins1@maryland.gov**

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