

SB 601 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

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 601

Baltimore City Soil Conservation District – Establishment – Requirements

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee:

I write to urge you to **support** Senate Bill 601. Establishing a soil conservation district in Baltimore City will bolster environmental sustainability efforts, restore natural resources, and provide new opportunities for the constituents of the City to impact and interact more with their environment.

In working to protect Maryland's natural habitats and bring forth new environmentally friendly opportunities, I propose Senate Bill 601. Under this bill, there is instruction to establish a soil conservation district within the boundaries of Baltimore City. Inasmuch, Senate Bill 601 sets requirements and provides directives to the Mayor of Baltimore City and Secretary of State—with special regards to the creation, record, organization, and other housekeeping details necessary to properly establish and supervise the district.

Establishing a soil conservation district in the City of Baltimore opens the doors to a plethora of positive possibilities—for the environment and the district's constituents. It is an investment into the future, as well as an opportunity to make an impact today. This initiative is one step that will benefit our environment, economy, and quality of life.

If enacted, Senate Bill 601 will take effect on October 1, 2022, and will require the adoption of new practices in accordance with the change in law.

I respectfully request a favorable report of Senate Bill 601.

Respectfully submitted,

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

Cory V. McCray
State Senator, 45th District

Heidarian_Fair_Farms_SB_601_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 601- Baltimore City Soil Conservation District - Establishment - Requirements
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, both urban and rural, advocates, and business owners.

In Maryland, the city of Baltimore is the hub of urban agricultural innovation. Fair Farms works with urban farms and community organizations in the city such as BLISS Meadows, Hillen Homestead, and the Baltimore Farm Alliance. Others include Plantation Park Heights and the Black Yield Institute.

Soil Conservation Districts play a vital role in supporting farms. They work collaboratively with farmers to meet their needs and provide services that mitigate climate change such as nutrient and stormwater management.

Every county in Maryland has a soil conservation district except Baltimore City, which is independent of other counties. If we want to create an equitable food system that supports all types of farming, then Baltimore City needs one as well.

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



SB0601FavorableFAB.pdf

Uploaded by: Mariya Strauss

Position: FAV



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
mariya@farmalliancebaltimore.org

SB 601_CBF SUPPORT.pdf

Uploaded by: Robin Jessica Clark

Position: FAV



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education

Senate Bill 601

Baltimore City Soil Conservation District - Establishment – Requirements

Date: March 9, 2022

To: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

Position: **Support**

From: Robin Clark, Maryland Staff Attorney

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** SB 601 which provides for the establishment of a Baltimore City Soil Conservation District through updates to the State Code to allow for the appointment of soil conservation district supervisors and clarify the roles of the Mayor of Baltimore City and the Secretary of State, and make other technical and procedural changes to allow the district to be formed.

A Baltimore City-based Soil Conservation District will provide technical assistance needed to further urban agriculture

Soil Conservation Districts (SCDs) provide technical assistance and facilitate conservation funding for farming practices nationwide. SCDs gather local, state and federal agency staff in one office to provide resources to farmers, including conservation practices that protect water quality and prevent pollution runoff. Maryland currently has twenty-four SCDs, one for each County except Frederick County which has two, the Frederick and Catoctin soil conservation district.¹

Farming in Baltimore City consists of primarily urban agriculture which comes with a unique set of technical assistance challenges and funding needs. Many urban farms grow vegetables in “hoop houses,” which are greenhouses that extend the growing season. One of the limiting factors for Baltimore City farms is water, irrigation for their crops.

Funding for hoop houses, and technical assistance to overcome irrigation challenges could be provided by a Soil Conservation District office. For example, staff could assist urban farmers tap funding from the Federal USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service for hoop houses. The State NRCS Conservation team provides \$100,000 annually to each SCD in Maryland through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program to fund local farming projects.²

Urban agriculture creates green spaces and provide healthy produce to residents

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation has worked with Baltimore City in the greening of abandoned lots. CBF supports conservation programs including urban farming that can preserve a green print within a developed area. Green space can help mitigate stormwater runoff into local waterways and the Bay. With this

¹ Maryland Department of Agriculture, [Soil Conservation Districts](#), last visited 2.18.2021.

² United States Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#), last visited 2.18.2021.

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legislation, Baltimore City would have assistance through a District office to target urban farming practices to mitigate climate change, improve water quality, build healthy soils and reduce the amount of pollution in local waterways and the Chesapeake Bay.

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation also seeks to increase local food production and providing healthy food in food priority areas. The COVID pandemic highlighted disparities and health risks associated with lack of access to nutritious food. CBF supports local food purchases through its Buy Fresh Buy Local Chesapeake program which helps consumers, sustainable farms, and businesses find each other and support efforts to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on SB 601. For more information, please contact Robin Jessica Clark, Maryland Staff Attorney at rclark@cbf.org and 443.995.8753.

Senate Bill 601 - MASCD - Information.pdf

Uploaded by: Jen Nelson

Position: INFO



March 9, 2022

The Honorable Paul Pinsky, Chairman
Senate Education, Health, & Environmental Affairs Committee

Re: Senate Bill 601 – Baltimore City Soil Conservation District - Establishment – Requirements

Position: **Informational**

Chairman Pinsky & Committee Members:

On behalf of the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts (MASCD) I am providing information regarding the establishment of a Baltimore City Soil Conservation District. MASCD, incorporated in 1956, promotes practical and effective soil, water, and natural resource related programs to all Marylanders. Through individual conservation districts MASCD provides leadership, education, cooperation, and local direction, on a voluntary basis, promoting these initiatives.

Agricultural operations are expanding within our urban landscapes in Maryland, doing everything from beekeeping to growing vegetables and flowers. Farming techniques such as vertical farming and hoop houses are implemented to contribute to a sustainable food network. These farmers work well within the urban environment, but at times face unique issues such as soil quality, water management on non-agricultural parcels, neighbor relations, and much more. Our organization believes Senate Bill 601 begins the necessary conversation in establishing a conservation district that will provide the technical and financial resources needed to navigate these issues.

MASCD contains thousands of success stories ranging from innovative conservation techniques to waterway management. Conservation districts are locally led to address soil and water issues at the district level while also connecting their farmers and residents to resources at the state and federal level. Our shared success is the result of a network of partners established through a fair and just process in which the agricultural communities throughout the State are appointed and serve the common goal of their communities. A unified future for agriculture in the State of Maryland is proved to be effective when we can work together.

Thank you for your kind consideration and attention to this legislation.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jen Nelson, Executive Director
Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts