



March 11, 2022

House Bill 646

**Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland -
Funding for Southern Maryland Agricultural
Development Commission**

House Environment and Transportation Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

House Bill 646 ensures that the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC) will continue to receive a consistent, reliable level of support from the Cigarette Restitution Fund in order to assist farmers in transitioning from tobacco production to alternative crops and agricultural enterprises.

The State's Cigarette Restitution Fund (CRF) was established in 1999 in order to provide guardrails for the spending of State payments received under the Master Settlement Agreement with tobacco manufacturers. One year later, the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland convened SMADC after the State instituted a voluntary tobacco buy-out program to transition farms out of tobacco production. SMADC's purpose is to stabilize the region's agricultural economy through programs and assistance as Maryland farmers transition away from tobacco production.

SMADC serves over 2,000 farms consisting of more than 200,000 acres across Anne Arundel and four other counties in the Southern Maryland region. SMADC also maintains several statewide agricultural programs, such as the Maryland Market Money Program that serves local producers and farmers markets in order to connect low income families to fresh food. The State's annual investment in SMADC has proven wise because SMADC has been able to leverage it in order to secure an even greater amount of non-State funding to support programs and grants.

SMADC has proven effective in creating opportunities for farmers in Anne Arundel. The annual funding in this bill will ensure that SMADC has the support it needs to continue assisting farmers and preserve the rich agricultural history of the Southern Maryland region. For these reasons, we respectfully urge the Committee to give HB 646 a **FAVORABLE** report.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Steuart Pittman".

Steuart Pittman
County Executive