



February 25, 2022

To: House Environment & Transportation Committee

From: MidAtlantic Farm Credit

Bill: HB 855 – Agriculture – Urban Agriculture Water and Power Infrastructure Grant Program and Fund - Establishment

Position: SUPPORT

MidAtlantic Farm Credit is a member-owned cooperative supporting rural communities and agriculture with reliable, consistent credit and financial services in good times and bad. Headquartered in Westminster, MD, we are one of the largest agricultural lenders on the East Coast with over \$3.1 billion dollars in loans outstanding to over 12,000 member-owners representing the full range of agriculture throughout our five-state territory.

This bill would create the Urban Agriculture Water and Power Infrastructure Grant Program within the Maryland Department of Agriculture to help support for-profit and non-profit urban ag operations across the State. The program will provide up to 87.5% cost-share funding to qualified applicants for the installation of equipment associated with irrigation, water supply, and electric power access.

The bill calls for the program to be funded at \$500,000 per year in a non-lapsing fund beginning in FY2024 and continuing through FY2027 with the ultimate intent of the program to increase the viability of urban farming and community gardens and improve access to urban-grown foods.

Whether a for-profit venture or a non-profit organization seeking to supplement the local church food pantry, urban agricultural producers require much of the same infrastructure needs as their rural brethren – perhaps on a different scale and scope – but nevertheless critical to the operation’s success. This cost-share program will help defray some of the unique infrastructure costs faced by this dynamic and growing sector of Maryland agriculture.

Whether it’s irrigation lines in a hoop house growing vegetables and leafy greens, the running of electric lines to power cold storage, or installing electric or water meters at new access points on vacant lots, each project means the potential for a more viable operation and a better chance at a plentiful harvest. And of course, investments in these operations often means long-lasting improvements that can increase access to fresh food, beautify the neighborhood, and enhance quality of life for its residents.

MidAtlantic Farm Credit SUPPORTS HB 855.

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