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Environment and
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Subcommittees
Environment
Motor Vehicle and Transportation



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 25, 2022

RE: HB855 Agriculture – Urban Agriculture Water and Power Infrastructure Grant Program and Fund – Establishment

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Environment & Transportation Committee:

For the record, I am Delegate Regina T. Boyce presenting **HB855 Agriculture – Urban Agriculture Water and Power Infrastructure Grant Program and Fund – Establishment**.

The purpose of HB855 is to increase the viability of urban farming and community gardens, and improve access to urban-grown foods by creating a grant program and fund. The established grant program would allow commercial urban agricultural producers to purchase equipment associated with water supply and irrigation, and electric power access. More specifically, the grant program will allow the purchase and installation of water meters and pipes, irrigation hoses, electric meters, and electrical lines. The grant program provides up to 87.5% of grant funds with the grantee providing at least 12.5% of the match. HB855 requires the Governor to include \$500,000 in the State budget each year beginning in FY 2024 for four years: FY 2024 to FY 2027. The fund is non-lapsing.

The most important part of HB855 is the definition of “urban agricultural producer”: any person that annually sells or normally would have sold, or plans to sell \$1000 or more of farm products in Maryland produced from the farming operation.

Urban agriculture faces challenges of higher costs for land and water, and smaller growing areas that are frequently in close proximity to homes and businesses. Most urban farms utilize municipal water supplies and are subject to zoning laws that make it difficult to farm.

HB855 will increase production of urban agriculture across the state by removing the water challenges so many face.

Thank you for your consideration of HB855. I urge a favorable report.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Regina T. Boyce".

Regina T. Boyce