



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**TESTIMONY OF DELEGATE PAM QUEEN
HB 156 – Urban Agricultural Incentive Zones - Authorization
SUPPORT**

Greetings Chair Kumar Barve, Vice-Chair Dana Stein, and members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

HB 156 establishes urban agriculture zones to *promote* environmentally friendly economic development, *develop* green spaces in urban areas, and *expand* local access to fresh produce and agricultural products. The expansion of urban agriculture represents a key tool in addressing chronic inequality in food availability in urban regions while creating job opportunities in these communities.

This bill provides for incentives and allows for Maryland to use USDA grants for this initiative. The Conservation Law Foundation outlines several benefits including nutrition, health, economic, and environmental for communities with urban agriculture zones - <https://www.clf.org/blog/the-power-of-urban-agriculture-in-transforming-a-community/#:~:text=Nutrition%3A%20Urban%20agriculture%20offers%20increased,and%20vegetables%20can%20be%20challenging>. Based on similar policies from other states for every 1 dollar invested in urban agriculture results in 6 dollars produced in those communities.

This bill is a first-step to provide many benefits to communities in Maryland, especially in Healthy Food Priority Areas where the average Healthy Food Availability Index is low, the median income is below the Federal Poverty Level, and limited access to nearby supermarkets.