



## **POSITION STATEMENT**

Support of SB 418 (HB 592)

Property Tax - Agricultural Land and Improvements -Assessment

As Director of the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC), I am requesting that you provide a favorable report for SB 418.

The importance of the ability of our farmers to be able to make a living with their farm businesses cannot be overstated; and the state's current approach to Ag assessment directly threatens that.

It seems to many farmers and agricultural industry professionals, that agricultural improvements and assessments began to skyrocket. When questioned, the reasons given by the department were that these value-added farms seem to be generating more money, and because of that their on-farm improvements should be assessed at a higher rate – without the ag use assessment. These buildings are not Walmart's, or 7- 11's, or any other commercial structure, these buildings are located on farms, owned by farmers, and being used for farm use - thus they should be assessed and taxed under the agricultural use tax rate, as they always have previously.

Alleviating this sudden unnecessary tax increase for our farms will allow them to operate their local businesses with peace of mind, and in a more regulatory friendly environment, as they continue to boost the agricultural economy within their communities across the state.

Considering that the population of the State of Maryland is approx. 6.1 million people (2021), but we only have roughly 12,000 farms, we want to do what we can to ensure their survival, as they provide fresh and shelf stable local products for us all, as well as ensuring open space remains a state that is constantly being highly developed.

Farmers face a lot of challenges; weather, labor shortages, an increasing cost of living, stringent permitting and regulatory processes, and others, let not add an undo tax burden to their worries as well.

I humbly request that the committee support HB 592 and give it a favorable report.

Thank You,

**Shelby Watson-Hampton**

Director, Southern Maryland Agricultural  
Development Commission (SMADC)

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