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March 22, 2023

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Committee,

We are writing in strong support of **HB0152** on behalf of Waterkeepers Chesapeake, a coalition of seventeen Waterkeepers working to make the waters of the Chesapeake and Coastal Bays swimmable and fishable, and on behalf of our Fair Farms Initiative. We support this bill because it seeks to make healthy food more affordable and accessible for disadvantaged communities within our Watershed who consequently suffer from health problems due to lack of accessibility. Urban farms are an effective means of providing access to healthier food options, including fresh produce, to areas of unmet need. Food deserts, areas that lack consistent access to healthy and nutritious food, are a serious problem for disadvantaged Maryland families. The food produced through the funding provided by this bill can serve needs throughout a local community and depending on size of the farm and volume, even a region, satisfying the goal of enhancing access to locally grown healthy food. The food produced through the funding provided by this bill can serve needs throughout a local community and depending on size of the farm and volume, even a region, satisfying the goal of enhancing access to locally grown healthy food.

**HB0152** will include \$250,000 for the Urban Agriculture Grant Fund in the annual budget from 2025 through 2029, as well as provide a larger percentage of funds to urban food producers. This bill also addresses climate change, because urban farms can sequester carbon, improve soil quality through composting, and reduce the distance food must be transported. We believe the Fund created through **HB0152** will be a positive step towards tackling food insecurity and health issues throughout Maryland.

For these reasons stated above, we urge the Committee to adopt a **FAVORABLE** report on **HB0152**.

Sincerely,

**Waterkeepers Chesapeake and partnering farmers signed below:**

Liz Whitehurst  
Owl's Nest Farm  
Upper Marlboro, MD

Doug Adams  
New Brooklyn Farms  
Mt. Rainer, MD

Ibrafall (Bryan) Wright  
Strength to Love 2 Farm  
Baltimore, MD