



**POSITION STATEMENT
Support of HB 0812**

**Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland – Southern Maryland Agricultural Development
Commission – Funding**

Environment & Taxation Committee – March 8th, 2024

Dear Mister Chair and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for having me here today.

As Director of the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC), a division of the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland, I am urging members of the committee to support HB812 and the ask for permanent (and slightly increased) funding for the commission; as SMADC plays a pivotal role in supporting local farmers, promoting agricultural education, and fostering sustainable practices. Healthy communities start with healthy local food.

It is important to note that this is not new funding SMADC is seeking, it's current existing funding that comes into the state every year from the Cigarette Restitution Fund (CRF), of which 5% was promised to SMADC twenty years ago upon their creation during the Tobacco Buyout. Despite what was written at that time, SMADC has consistently gotten less than that, and has been existing off only \$900,000 a year from that fund.

This bill asks that SMADC receive at least \$1 million annually or up to the original 5% of the CRF as promised. The CRF fund itself is continual and non-lapsing.

It is worth noting that last fiscal year, with just our \$900,000 in base funding, SMADC was able to leverage that to bring in over \$3 million additional dollars in grants to the region.

SMADC's success is proven. In FY23 alone we grew the Maryland Market Money program, a matching dollar program for low-income families using SNAP & WIC at the farmers market to over 60+ locations and over 720 farmers/producers, and overall, SMADC directly served 454 farms in the region through our programs.

The Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission
is a division of the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland
P.O. Box 745 Hughesville, MD 20637
Phone - 240-528-8850 ~ Email – info@smadc.com





In addition, the following folks have submitted letters of support or testimony for this bill:

Maryland Farm Bureau, Rural Maryland Council, Prince George's County Farm Bureau, the Charles County Soil Conservation District, the Charles County Farm Bureau, the Anne Arundel County Farm Bureau, the Southern Maryland Shellfish Growers Association, the Calvert County Board of Commissioners, the St. Mary's County Commissioners, the Charles County Commissioners and multiple farmers across the region.

Please see several of these letters attached in the pages below.

I urge you to please support HB812, and I thank you for your time and consideration.

Shelby Watson Hampton

Best Regards,

Shelby Watson-Hampton

Director, Southern Maryland Agricultural

Development Commission (SMADC)

swatsonhampton@smadc.com

www.smadc.com

(240) 304-8535

The Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission
is a division of the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland
P.O. Box 745 Hughesville, MD 20637
Phone - 240-528-8850 ~ Email – info@smadc.com





CHARLES SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Organized 1941

4200 Gardiner Road
Waldorf, MD 20601
(301) 638-3028

March 5, 2024

Environment and Transportation Committee
c/o Delegate Marc A. Korman, Chair
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Subject: Support of HB 812 (Cross-file SB 0589) Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland – Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission – Funding

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee,

The Charles Soil Conservation District urges members of the committee to support HB 0812 and the ask for permanent (and slightly increased) funding for the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC), as they play a pivotal role in supporting local farmers, feeding hungry Marylanders, and fostering sustainable practices.

It is important to note that this is not new funding SMADC is seeking. It is current funding that comes into the state every year from the Cigarette Restitution Fund (CRF), of which 5% was promised to SMADC twenty years ago upon their creation during the Tobacco Buyout. SMADC has consistently received less and has been existing off of only \$900,000 a year from that fund. It is worth noting that last fiscal year, with just \$900,000 in base funding, SMADC was able to leverage that to bring in over \$3 million additional dollars in grants to the region.

This bill asks that SMADC receive at least \$1 million annually or up to the original 5% of the CRF as promised, in perpetuity. The proposed increase in funding to at least \$1,000,000 is essential for supporting the agricultural economy, small business innovation, and food and farming education.

SMADC's success is proven. In FY23 alone they awarded 22 farm mini grants totaling \$37,950, awarded scholarships and sponsorships totaling \$15,052, awarded \$14,500 to youth farmers in the SOMD Meats Program, awarded \$93,238 in equipment grants, grew the Maryland Market Money matching program for low-income families at the farmers market to 60+ locations and over 720 farmers/producers, directly served 454 farms through grants, marketing, resources, and events, and much more through all of their active programming.

The Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland is an integral part of our community. The Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC), under its purview, plays a pivotal role in supporting local farmers, promoting agricultural education, and fostering sustainable practices.



CHARLES SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Organized 1941

4200 Gardiner Road
Waldorf, MD 20601
(301) 638-3028

Through the support of SMADC, the Charles Soil Conservation District has been able to make agricultural equipment easily available for rent to the southern Maryland agricultural community. This has enabled farmers to carry out soil conservation related work for the betterment of our farmland and overall environment. SMADC has been an active partner in promoting agricultural education in our region.

The proposed increase in appropriation from \$900,000 to \$1,000,000 will provide the necessary resources for the Commission to expand its initiatives and contribute to the economic vitality of our region. We support steps toward ensuring consistent and reliable funding for SMADC's ongoing activities.

We urge you to support House Bill 0812 to contribute to the sustained growth and prosperity of agriculture in Southern Maryland and statewide.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Luis Dieguez

Luis Dieguez
District Manager

BRIAN CROSBY
Legislative District 29B
St. Mary's County

Vice Chair
Economic Matters Committee



Annapolis Office
The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 231
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3227 · 301-858-3227
800-492-7122 Ext. 3227
Brian.Crosby@house.state.md.us

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Bill: HB 0812: Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland – Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission – Funding

Position: FAV

March 6, 2024

Dear Chair Korman, Vice Chair Boyce, and esteemed Members of the Environment and Transportation Committee:

I respectfully request that you issue a favorable report on HB 0812. This bill will provide permanent (and slightly increased) funding for the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC). The Commission plays a pivotal role in supporting local farmers, feeding hungry Marylanders, and fostering sustainable practices.

It is important to note that SMADC is not seeking new funding. Upon the creation of the Cigarette Restitution Fund (CRF) twenty years ago, 5% of annual funds were promised to SMADC. However, SMADC has consistently received less than they were promised. SMADC has been managing with only \$900,000 a year from that fund. It is worth noting that last fiscal year, with just the aforementioned \$900,000 in base funding, SMADC was able to leverage that amount to bring in over \$3 million in additional grants to the region.

This bill asks that SMADC receive at least \$1 million annually, or up to the original 5% of the CRF as promised, in perpetuity. The proposed increase in funding to at least \$1,000,000 is essential for supporting the agricultural economy, small business innovation, and food and farming education.

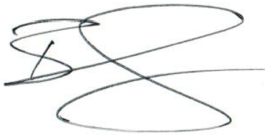
SMADC's success is proven. In FY23 alone, they awarded 22 farm mini grants totaling \$37,950, awarded scholarships and sponsorships totaling \$15,052, awarded \$14,500 to youth farmers in the SOMD Meats Program, awarded \$93,238 in equipment grants, grew the Maryland Market Money matching program for low-income families at the farmers market to 60+ locations and over 720 farmers/producers, directly served 454 farms through grants, marketing, resources, and events, and much more through all of their active programming.

The proposed increase in appropriation from \$900,000 to \$1,000,000 will provide the necessary resources for the Commission to expand its initiatives and contribute to the economic vitality of our region. Additionally, the repeal of the termination of certain provisions of law related to the annual budget bill appropriation is a positive step toward ensuring consistent and reliable funding for the Commission's ongoing activities. SMADC and the farmers they serve are a proven worthwhile return on investment.

I urge you to support HB 0812 to contribute to the sustained growth and prosperity of agriculture in Southern Maryland and statewide.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Brian Crosby", written in a cursive style.

Delegate Brian Crosby
District 29B, St. Mary's County

POSITION STATEMENT

Support of HB 812

(Cross-file SB 0589)

**Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland – Southern Maryland Agricultural Development
Commission – Funding**

Environment & Transportation Committee

February 13th, 2024

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Edward Goodman and I am a Horticultural Conservationist with M-NCPPC, I am also a private business owned in Southern Maryland and I am urging members of the committee to support HB 0812 and the ask for permanent (and slightly increased) funding for the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC), as they play a pivotal role in supporting local farmers, feeding hungry Marylanders, and fostering sustainable practices.

It is important to note that this is not new funding SMADC is seeking, it's current existing funding that comes into the state every year from the Cigarette Restitution Fund (CRF), of which 5% was promised to SMADC twenty years ago upon their creation during the Tobacco Buyout. Despite what was written at that time, SMADC has consistently gotten less than that, and has been existing off only \$900,000 a year from that fund. **It is worth noting that last fiscal year, with just \$900,000 in base funding, SMADC was able to leverage that to bring in over \$3 million additional dollars in grants to the region.**

This bill asks that SMADC receive at least \$1 million annually or up to the original 5% of the CRF as promised, in perpetuity. The proposed increase in funding to at least \$1,000,000 is essential for supporting the agricultural economy, small business innovation, and food and farming education.

SMADC's success is proven. In FY23 alone they awarded 22 farm mini grants totaling \$37,950, awarded scholarships and sponsorships totaling \$15,052, awarded \$14,500 to youth farmers in the SOMD Meats Program, awarded \$93,238 in equipment grants, grew the Maryland Market Money matching program for low-income families at the farmers market to 60+ locations and over 720 farmers/producers, directly served 454 farms through grants, marketing, resources, and events, and much more through all of their active programming.

I participate in the Commission as a representative for Calvert's young farmers. As 100% of my income is related to farming and horticulture, I am very aware of and am proud to participate in SMADC's efforts across Southern Maryland. I am proud to say I am one of the commission members that voted to give over \$1,000,000 of SMADC funding to build the RAC or Regional Agriculture Center in St. Mary's County, and that is just one major example of how I have assisted over my 5-year tenure on the commission.

The proposed increase in appropriation from \$900,000 to \$1,000,000 will provide the necessary resources for the Commission to expand its initiatives and contribute to the economic vitality of our region. Additionally, the repeal of the termination of certain provisions of law related to the annual budget bill appropriation is a positive step toward ensuring consistent and reliable funding for the

Commission's ongoing activities. SMADC and the farmers they serve are a proven worthwhile return on investment.

I urge you to support HB 0812 to contribute to the sustained growth and prosperity agriculture in Southern Maryland and statewide.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Edward L. Goodman

POSITION STATEMENT

Support of HB 812

(Cross-file SB 0589)

**Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland – Southern Maryland Agricultural Development
Commission – Funding**

Environment & Transportation Committee

February 13th, 2024

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kayla Griffith and I am a farmer in Anne Arundel County, my farm is Griffith Family Farm and we just celebrated our Century Farm year last year. I urge members of the committee to support HB 0812 and the ask for permanent (and slightly increased) funding for the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC), as they play a pivotal role in supporting local farmers, feeding hungry Marylanders, and fostering sustainable practices.

SMADC's success is proven. In FY23 alone they awarded 22 farm mini grants totaling \$37,950, awarded scholarships and sponsorships totaling \$15,052, awarded \$14,500 to youth farmers in the SOMD Meats Program, awarded \$93,238 in equipment grants, grew the Maryland Market Money matching program for low-income families at the farmers market to 60+ locations and over 720 farmers/producers, directly served 454 farms through grants, marketing, resources, and events, and much more through all of their active programming.

I have personally benefited from SMADC, I have been awarded one of their mini-grants to start a heritage chicken farm and have attended multiple sessions hosted by SMADC focused on value-added agriculture to help my farm. Farmers have access to very few resources and we need to keep each current organization in tact and strengthen them to keep supporting us during these difficult economic times.

The proposed increase in appropriation from \$900,000 to \$1,000,000 will provide the necessary resources for the Commission to expand its initiatives and contribute to the economic vitality of our region. Additionally, the repeal of the termination of certain provisions of law related to the annual budget bill appropriation is a positive step toward ensuring consistent and reliable funding for the Commission's ongoing activities. SMADC and the farmers they serve are a proven worthwhile return on investment.

I urge you to support HB 0812 to contribute to the sustained growth and prosperity agriculture in Southern Maryland and statewide.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Kayla Griffith
Griffith Family Farm
Kaylamgriffith88@gmail.com

Forrest Hall Farm, Inc.

39136 Avie Lane, Mechanicsville, MD 20659 • 301-884-3086 • admin@forresthallfarm.com • www.forresthallfarm.com



March 6, 2024

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Environment & Transportation Committee:

I am happy to write this letter of support for HB 0812. This Bill will make a slight improvement to the funding level and make permanent the funding for the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC) and it will do it by continuing the use of the Cigarette Restitution Fund dollars that flow into Maryland each year in perpetuity as part of the Tobacco Buyout and Master Settlement Agreements of more than 20 years ago. There is no new money or tax dollars in this legislation. As you may already know, these funds can only be used by the Maryland State Health Department or the Southern Maryland Agricultural Commission.

The Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission was set up at that time to administer the buyout program and assist Southern Maryland farmers in transitioning out of tobacco production and into new enterprises for their farming operations. The goal was and remains to keep our farms profitable and sustainable and to assist the many hundreds of farms and farmers in the five county Southern Maryland region of our state. The result of this work helps to keep Agriculture as Maryland's number one industry.

We are asking for your support of this legislation so that this commission can continue its work with a reliable source of income to assist the farmers of Southern Maryland.

Thank you for your consideration of this legislation.

Sincerely,

Mary C. Wood

SMADC Chair and St. Mary's County Farmer

POSITION STATEMENT

Support of HB 812

(Cross-file SB 0589)

Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland – Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission – Funding

Environment & Transportation Committee

February 13th, 2024

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee,

I am Joan Hill Bearden of PZ Hill Farm LLC in Mechanicsville MD and current board member of SMADC. I am urging members of the committee to support HB 0812 and the ask for permanent (and slightly increased) funding for the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC), as they play a pivotal role in supporting local farmers, feeding hungry Marylanders, and fostering sustainable practices.

It is important to note that this is not new funding SMADC is seeking, it's current existing funding that comes into the state every year from the Cigarette Restitution Fund (CRF), of which 5% was promised to SMADC twenty years ago upon their creation during the Tobacco Buyout. Despite what was written at that time, SMADC has consistently gotten less than that, and has been existing off only \$900,000 a year from that fund. **It is worth noting that last fiscal year, with just \$900,000 in base funding, SMADC was able to leverage that to bring in over \$3 million additional dollars in grants to the region.**

This bill asks that SMADC receive at least \$1 million annually or up to the original 5% of the CRF as promised, in perpetuity. The proposed increase in funding to at least \$1,000,000 is essential for supporting the agricultural economy, small business innovation, and food and farming education.

SMADC's success is proven. In FY23 alone they awarded 22 farm mini grants totaling \$37,950, awarded scholarships and sponsorships totaling \$15,052, awarded \$14,500 to youth farmers in the SOMD Meats Program, awarded \$93,238 in equipment grants, grew the Maryland Market Money matching program for low-income families at the farmers market to 60+ locations and over 720 farmers/producers, directly served 454 farms through grants, marketing, resources, and events, and much more through all of their active programming.

As a farm owner and current board member of SMADC, I have experienced firsthand the value of SMADC support and the dedication of the staff to resolve agriculture issues in Southern Maryland. I am particularly proud of the recent accomplishment of securing the construction of the Regional Agriculture Center in St. Mary's County. In addition, the direction and guidance provided by SMADC to establish the Amish USDA Slaughter Facility not only supports the Amish community, the facility will be valuable for the Regional Agricultural Center. I feel this project is a perfect example of how SMADC supports agricultural and community needs.

SMADC involvement in the Red Barns at New Market Maryland has allowed for the sale of local farmers products as well as making available local farm products for the Maryland community. Produce, flowers and other products from the Loveville Produce Market are distributed to Marylanders by way of the Red Barns at New Market. SMADC also provided direction and guidance in the establishment of the Amish

cheese factory which has helped keep Amish dairy farmers in business. These efforts help to keep our local farmers profitable and preserve rural areas of Maryland.

Other efforts include conducting a study of the blue catfish, engaging with the seafood community to find ways to assist watermen, working with the timber industry to find ways to increase rural opportunities, and supporting efforts to provide food for Maryland Food Insecure Families.

I feel the accomplishments listed above clearly demonstrate the value of supporting SMADC and the benefits it provides to agricultural and community interests in the region. As we head into an uncertain future it is critical that we ensure that agriculture continues to remain a vital industry in the region and the state of Maryland.

The proposed increase in appropriation from \$900,000 to \$1,000,000 will provide the necessary resources for the Commission to expand its initiatives and contribute to the economic vitality of our region. Additionally, the repeal of the termination of certain provisions of law related to the annual budget bill appropriation is a positive step toward ensuring consistent and reliable funding for the Commission's ongoing activities. SMADC and the farmers they serve are a proven worthwhile return on investment.

I urge you to support HB 0812 to contribute to the sustained growth and prosperity agriculture in Southern Maryland and statewide.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Joan Hill Bearden
PZ Hill Farm LLC

POSITION STATEMENT

Support of HB 812
(Cross-file SB 0589)

Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland – Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission – Funding

Environment & Transportation Committee

February 13th, 2024

Dear Chairperson Korman and Members of the Committee,

Christine Catterton, Anne Arundel Co. Farm Bureau-President. I am urging members of the committee to support HB 0812 and the ask for permanent (and slightly increased) funding for the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC), as they play a pivotal role in supporting local farmers, feeding hungry Marylanders, and fostering sustainable practices.

It is important to note that this is not new funding SMADC is seeking, it's current existing funding that comes into the state every year from the Cigarette Restitution Fund (CRF), of which 5% was promised to SMADC twenty years ago upon their creation during the Tobacco Buyout. Despite what was written at that time, SMADC has consistently gotten less than that, and has been existing off only \$900,000 a year from that fund. **It is worth noting that last fiscal year, with just \$900,000 in base funding, SMADC was able to leverage that to bring in over \$3 million additional dollars in grants to the region.**

This bill asks that SMADC receive at least \$1 million annually or up to the original 5% of the CRF as promised, in perpetuity. The proposed increase in funding to at least \$1,000,000 is essential for supporting the agricultural economy, small business innovation, and food and farming education.

SMADC's success is proven. In FY23 alone they awarded 22 farm mini grants totaling \$37,950, awarded scholarships and sponsorships totaling \$15,052, awarded \$14,500 to youth farmers in the SOMD Meats Program, awarded \$93,238 in equipment grants, grew the Maryland Market Money matching program for low-income families at the farmers market to 60+ locations and over 720 farmers/producers, directly served 454 farms through grants, marketing, resources, and events, and much more through all of their active programming.

I have a good relationship with SMADC. First this organization helps to secure agriculture in Southern Maryland offering many programs and opportunities to the farmers. I personally have received one of the grants to improve my farm and am thankful for the assistance. With continued funding SMADC will be able to continue their help and share their expertise in Southern Maryland.

The proposed increase in appropriation from \$900,000 to \$1,000,000 will provide the necessary resources for the Commission to expand its initiatives and contribute to the economic vitality of our region. Additionally, the repeal of the termination of certain provisions of law related to the annual budget bill appropriation is a positive step toward ensuring consistent and reliable funding for the Commission's ongoing activities. SMADC and the farmers they serve are a proven worthwhile return on investment.

I urge you to support HB 0812 to contribute to the sustained growth and prosperity agriculture in Southern Maryland and statewide.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Christine Catterton
Anne Arundel Co. Farm Bureau Member

POSITION STATEMENT

Support of HB 812

(Cross-file SB 0589)

Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland – Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission – Funding

Environment & Transportation Committee

February 13th, 2024

Dear Chair Korman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Brian Russell, and I am the President of the Southern Maryland Shellfish Growers Association. I am urging members of the committee to support HB 0812 and the ask for permanent (and slightly increased) funding for the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC), as they play a pivotal role in supporting local farmers, feeding hungry Marylanders, and fostering sustainable practices.

It is important to note that this is not new funding SMADC is seeking, it's current existing funding that comes into the state every year from the Cigarette Restitution Fund (CRF), of which 5% was promised to SMADC twenty years ago upon their creation during the Tobacco Buyout. Despite what was written at that time, SMADC has consistently gotten less than that, and has been existing off only \$900,000 a year from that fund. **It is worth noting that last fiscal year, with just \$900,000 in base funding, SMADC was able to leverage that to bring in over \$3 million additional dollars in grants to the region.**

This bill asks that SMADC receive at least \$1 million annually or up to the original 5% of the CRF as promised, in perpetuity. The proposed increase in funding to at least \$1,000,000 is essential for supporting the agricultural economy, small business innovation, and food and farming education.

SMADC's success is proven. In FY23 alone they awarded 22 farm mini grants totaling \$37,950, awarded scholarships and sponsorships totaling \$15,052, awarded \$14,500 to youth farmers in the SOMD Meats Program, awarded \$93,238 in equipment grants, grew the Maryland Market Money matching program for low-income families at the farmers market to 60+ locations and over 720 farmers/producers, directly served 454 farms through grants, marketing, resources, and events, and much more through all of their active programming.

SMADC has been a huge supporter of shellfish aquaculture in Southern Maryland for the last 15 years. In 2018 they adopted and now host the Southern Maryland Oyster Guide website. This is a guide which educates consumers about what oyster farming is and about where their oysters come from. SMADC has also included oyster farmers in their buy local challenge events where they encourage consumers to support small, local businesses. Oyster aquaculture is represented on SMDC's board and is included in discussions of future projects and proposals.

The proposed increase in appropriation from \$900,000 to \$1,000,000 will provide the necessary resources for the Commission to expand its initiatives and contribute to the economic vitality of our region. Additionally, the repeal of the termination of certain provisions of law related to the annual budget bill appropriation is a positive step toward ensuring consistent and reliable funding for the

Commission's ongoing activities. SMADC and the farmers they serve are a proven worthwhile return on investment.

I urge you to support HB 0812 to contribute to the sustained growth and prosperity agriculture in Southern Maryland and statewide.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Russell", written in a cursive style.

Brian Russell

Tresor Thomas
PO Box 177
St Leonard, MD 20685
contactus@my-mustard-seed.com
410-449-0204
3/6/2024

Support of HB 0812 (Cross-file SB0589) - Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland – Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission – Funding

Dear Chair Koreman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Tresor Thomas, and I am the Founder & CEO of My Mustard Seed. I am writing to express my dedicated support for Senate Bill 0589, which aims to increase the appropriation for the Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland from the Cigarette Restitution Fund. This amendment is crucial to the continued success and growth of the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission.

The Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland is an integral part of our community, and the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission, under its purview, plays a pivotal role in supporting local farmers, promoting agricultural education, and fostering sustainable practices.

I am a SMADC board member in the representation of Calvert County farmers. My role also provides a fresh outlook on urban farming and being a recipient of the Mini Grant Program has helped support our farm's expansion efforts. SMADC's vision of a diversified and profitable Southern Maryland agriculture industry that enhances the quality of life for all citizens through market-driven and sustainable farming, environmental stewardship, and awareness of the importance of agriculture for all citizens was the driving force of my decision to join the board. Their record has proven that they have embodied this vision. I believe that their commitment to developing infrastructures, supporting regional food chains and dedication to agricultural programs that enhance the economic viability of the region, not only has a significant impact locally but nationally as well. I am a witness to SMADC's consistent dedication and passion for the Agricultural communities that we serve.

Therefore, I am in favor of the proposed increase in appropriation from \$900,000 to \$1,000,000, as it will provide the necessary resources for the Commission to expand its initiatives and contribute to the economic vitality of our region. Additionally, the repeal of the termination of certain provisions of law related to the annual budget bill appropriation is a positive step toward ensuring consistent and reliable funding for the Commission's ongoing activities.

I urge you to support HB 812 to contribute to the sustained growth and prosperity of agriculture in Southern Maryland and statewide.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tresor Thomas