



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 8, 2024

**Testimony in favor of HB812 Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland –
Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission – Funding**

Chairman Korman, Vice Chairman Boyce, and Colleagues,

For two decades, SMADC has been instrumental in advancing agriculture in Southern Maryland, transforming it into a model of sustainability and economic vitality. Despite the successes, the base funding provided to SMADC has yet to keep pace with the needs of our agricultural community nor the growth potential. HB812 addresses this by ensuring at least \$1 million annually from the Cigarette Restitution Fund goes to SMADC, reflecting an increase necessary for the commission to continue its vital work.

In the last fiscal year alone, SMADC has demonstrated remarkable efficiency in leveraging its base funding to secure additional grants, extending its impact across various initiatives. These initiatives include providing mini-grants to farms, offering scholarships for agricultural education, and supporting local markets through the Maryland Market Money program.

An increase in funding, as proposed by HB812, will allow for the expansion of these successful programs and enable SMADC to undertake new projects that foster innovation, environmental stewardship, and economic development within the agricultural sector.

By supporting HB812, we can make a meaningful investment in the future of Maryland's agriculture, ensuring that our Southern Maryland farmers and rural communities have the resources they need to thrive in a competitive and ever-evolving marketplace.

I urge the committee to recognize the vital role that SMADC plays in Southern Maryland and to support HB812.

Thank you for your time, and with that, I ask for a favorable report.

###