

Yvonne Ford
12840 Red Heifer Winery Lane
Smithsburg, MD 218783
yvonne@redheiferwinery.com
301-824-5210
2/17/2025

The Honorable William Wivell
PO Box 333
Smithsburg, MD 21783

Dear Delegate Wivell,

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 0749, which proposes to include Washington County in the list of counties where an agricultural building used for agritourism is not considered a change of occupancy that requires a building permit under certain conditions. As a farm winery owner deeply invested in the growth of local agriculture and agritourism, I believe this bill represents a crucial step forward for both the agricultural community and the local economy.

Agritourism plays a vital role in promoting our agricultural heritage, creating jobs, and offering educational experiences that connect the public with farming practices. However, the regulatory barriers posed by the current requirement to obtain building permits when a farm structure is repurposed for agritourism can be burdensome and costly for small businesses like mine. This bill would provide much-needed flexibility for farmers and agritourism operators who wish to repurpose existing structures without incurring the financial and logistical strain of complying with permit requirements.

By including Washington County in this exemption, this legislation would promote innovation and growth in agritourism, ensuring that our local farmers and small businesses can continue to thrive. I am confident that this change would also lead to increased tourism and economic activity, benefiting not only agritourism operators but also local merchants, restaurants, and service providers.

I respectfully urge the support of this important piece of legislation, which will empower our agricultural community and contribute to the continued success of agritourism in Washington County.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Should you have any questions or require further input, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,

Yvonne Ford
Owner, Red Heifer Winery
Red Heifer Winery LLC