



Maryland Forests Association, Inc.

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March 8, 2022

The Honorable Kumar P. Barve, Chair  
The Honorable Dana Stein, Vice-Chair  
House Environment & Transportation Committee  
House Office Building Room 252  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: HB646- Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission-Support

Dear Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Maryland Forests Association, Inc. (MFA) is Maryland's voice for forest, wildlife, and natural resource management. As a non-profit 501 c(3) membership-driven organization established in 1976, we represent the entire forest community statewide. Our membership includes private landowners, foresters, recreational groups, and industry stakeholders. We are a conservation-minded group that wants to see forests remain forests. Our industry and goals are often misunderstood and confused with land clearing and land-use change.

The Southern Maryland Agriculture Development Commission has been critical in helping our organization stomp out these misconceptions. They have produced several publications that shine a positive light on forestry- highlighting the social, environmental, and economic benefits of sustainable forest management. These productions have helped move the needle on public perception placing forestry more on par with agriculture where it should be.

I am writing to you in solid support of HB646 Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland - Funding for Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission. The bill is asking for an annual budget of \$900,000 from the Cigarette Restitution Fund (CRF) to be funded to the Tri-County Council of Southern Maryland for their SMADC department (TCCSMD/SMADC). The CRF fund is part of the Master Settlement Agreement (MSA) that comes into Maryland every year in perpetuity. SMADC currently receives \$900,000 from that fund; however, it is due to sunset soon; this bill would ensure that SMADC continues to receive funding from the continual non-lapsing CRF fund. For many years now, SMADC has utilized the CRF fund to help farmers transition out of tobacco production and into other agriculture sectors-such as tree farms! SMADC has a proven track record in providing valuable assistance, programs, and grant funds to the farming community and being a valued partner to other ag industry organizations such as MFA. Passage of HB646 is crucial because the partnership with SMADC helps MFA accomplish our vision- "The Maryland Forests Association envisions a future in which vibrant forests are maintained throughout the State, providing diverse economic and environmental benefits to all."

In closing, SMADC has a proven track record of successful projects. Therefore, I ask respectfully request your favorable report on HB646, which would allow SMADC to continue serving the agriculture and forest communities of Southern Maryland. Feel free to contact me via email at [beth@mdforests.org](mailto:beth@mdforests.org) with any questions or concerns

Sincerely,

Elizabeth D. Hill, Executive Director