

March 9, 2022

To: Senate Budget & Taxation Committee
From: Amy G. Crone
Re: Support of HB0646 – Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland - Funding for Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission

I am a farmer in Anne Arundel County and I am writing to you in strong support for SB0378 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 the state 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 consistent 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 sectors of agriculture. SMADC has a proven track record in providing valuable assistance, programs, and grant funds to the farming community, as well as being a valued partner to other ag industry organizations such as the Maryland Farm Bureau, MARBIDCO, the Maryland Department of Agriculture, and others.

Funding SMADC is crucial because:

- SMADC serves 2,011 farms on 205,000 acres in the five county Southern Maryland area; Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Prince George's, & St. Mary's Counties, and maintains several statewide agricultural programs now as well.
- In FY22, with only \$900,000 in operating funds provided by the State to run the organization, SMADC proceeded to bring an additional \$1.3 million dollars into Maryland via non-state funding for programs and grants supporting the Maryland farming & small business community. SMADC is a good investment for the state.
- SMADC is currently in the process of building a \$4.7 million dollar Regional Agricultural Center (RAC) that will transform the agricultural business economy in Southern Maryland and beyond.
- SMADC's Maryland Market Money Program serves 550 local producers and 46 farmers markets statewide, providing over \$449,000 worth of fresh food to low income families.

Our farm received a grant from SMADC as well as utilizing SMADC's technical assistance so that we can sell meat from our farm. I also serve as part of the SMADC small grants review group – a program that has now provided almost \$200,000 in grants to farmers in the region. I have seen the difference that SMADC has made in improving farms throughout the 5 county area. The RAC will make a huge difference for small farmers in the area, and in particular help meat producers become more viable. Lastly, I started the Maryland Market Money program and over the years have seen the impact it has made on food access and ensuring that everyone can purchase fresh healthy locally grown food. MMM is an important program that should be regularly funded since it helps both low-income Marylanders and farmers simultaneously.

Best Regards,



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