



**HB 152**  
**Department of Agriculture –**  
**Urban Agriculture Grant Programs – Alterations**  
**Testimony before Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee**  
**Hearing March 23, 2023**  
**Position: FAVORABLE**

Mr. Chairman, Mdm. Vice Chair, and members of the committee, my name is Elizabeth Fixsen, and I represent the 700+ members of Indivisible Howard County. Indivisible Howard County is an active member of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (with 30,000+ members). We are providing written testimony today in support of HB152, requiring the Governor to include at least \$100,000 funding under the Urban Agriculture Grant Fund, for fiscal years 2025 through 2029. The bill will also establish the Urban Agriculture Advisory Committee to recommend guidelines, policies, and practices for the implementation of the Grant Program.

Urban agriculture includes the cultivation, processing, and distribution of agricultural products in urban and suburban areas. Community gardens, rooftop farms, hydroponic, aeroponic, and aquaponic facilities, and vertical production are all examples of urban agriculture.

There are numerous benefits to urban agriculture:

- It reduces costs of transporting food from grower to market, thus reducing carbon dioxide emissions that are causing climate change.
- It reduces heat island effects in the urban environment
- It creates resilient food systems and promotes biodiversity
- It enhances property value, where rooftops, terraces, and ground spaces become green oases.
- It provides urban dwellers with some hands-on proximity to nature, enhancing physical and mental well-being
- It provides learning platforms that raise awareness of the importance of a healthy diet
- It provides access to fresh produce in “food desert” neighborhoods.

Because of all these important environmental and health benefits, urban agriculture in Maryland deserves the support that this bill will provide. Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation.

**We respectfully urge a favorable report.**

Elizabeth Fixsen  
Savage, MD

Sources Cited: <https://microhabitat.ca/7-benefits-of-urban-agriculture/>,  
<https://www.nal.usda.gov/farms-and-agricultural-production-systems/urban-agriculture>