



BRANDON M. SCOTT
MAYOR

*Office of Government Relations
88 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401*

HB0152

March 23, 2023

TO: Members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Interim Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: House Bill-0152– Department of Agriculture – Urban Agriculture Grants

POSITION: Support

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and Members of the Environment & Transportation Committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports** House Bill 0152– Department of Agriculture – Urban Agriculture Grants.

House Bill 0152 will provide urban agriculture grants across Maryland, reserving 25% of those grants for Baltimore City. This bill expands the number of jurisdictions and qualified applicants who can receive these grant funds, adjusts the requirements for a grant review board and dedicates \$250,000 for these grants for fiscal years 2025-2029.

The bill supports more inclusive urban agriculture planning across the state and has no negative impact on Baltimore City's urban agriculture work. While most of the review board membership language was changed to not be Baltimore City specific, a representative from the Baltimore City Department of Planning is still on the list as a required appointee. Thus, the bill appears to acknowledge the critical role Baltimore City plays in Maryland's urban agriculture sector. HB-0152 also opens funding to non-profits and institutions of higher education that are providing training programs to urban farmers, linking grants for farmers to a training program or continuing education program. Additionally, the bill restricts the portion of any grant that can be used for purchasing real property to 20% of the overall grant funds.

Enhancing urban agriculture activity across the state of Maryland fosters a more robust statewide network of urban growers who collectively infuse resiliency in local food systems, including Baltimore's. For these reasons, the BCA respectfully request a **favorable** report on House Bill-0152.