



June 4, 2026

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE

TO: Planning, Housing and Economic Development (PHED) Committee

THRU: Rana Hightower *RH*
Committee Director, PHED

FROM: David Noto *DN*
Legislative Budget and Policy Analyst

RE: Policy Analysis and Fiscal Impact Statement
CR-039-2026 A Rural Promotion for Agri-Tourism

CR-039-2026 (*proposed by:* Council Members Dernoga and Blegay; *introduced by* Council Members Dernoga, Blegay, Hunter, Olson and Oriadha)

Referred to the Planning, Housing and Economic Development (PHED) Committee

A RESOLUTION CONCERNING A RURAL PROMOTION FOR AGRITOURISM, for the purpose of creating a plan for the collaboration of various State, regional and local entities with the goal of promoting agritourism in identified areas within Prince George's County.

Fiscal Summary

Direct Impact:

Expenditures: No anticipated expenditure impact.

Revenues: No anticipated revenue impact.

Indirect Impact:

Potentially favorable.

Legislative Summary:

CR-039-2026¹ was introduced on May 12, 2026, by Council Members Dernoga and Blegay, cosponsored by Council Members Hunter, Oriadha and Olson and referred to the Planning, Housing and Economic Development (PHED) Committee. This resolution would encourage partnerships between State and local entities such as the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC), University of Maryland Extension, the Soil Conservation District, and the Economic Development Corporation for the purpose of promoting agritourism in identified areas within Prince George's County.

Current Law/Background:

Prince George's County has a long-standing and vibrant agricultural sector that includes farms, vineyards, and agritourism operations. Agritourism activity in the County dates to at least the 1970s, with County farms offering a wide variety of experiences that are now considered agritourism, including pumpkin patches, corn mazes and pick-your-own operations.

State Law:

Agriculture is Maryland's largest commercial industry and contributed approximately \$8.25 billion to the state's economy in 2022.² Maryland's broader agricultural policy framework has increasingly recognized the role of value-added agriculture and agritourism in supporting the long-term sustainability of farming operations. A 2025 Maryland Department of Agriculture guidance document identified agritourism, value-added processing, and direct-to-consumer agricultural experiences as growing sectors within Maryland's agricultural economy, while also recognizing ongoing regulatory, zoning, and marketing challenges affecting these industries.³ The report further noted that smaller farm operations and changing agricultural patterns across the State have increased interest in agritourism and value-added enterprises as supplemental sources of economic activity.⁴ Also in 2025, Governor Moore enacted Executive Order 01.01.2025.18, which established the Governor's Intergovernmental Commission for Agriculture, to increase the profitability of state's agricultural sector by ensuring coordination among state agencies, local governments, and industry groups.⁵

Prince George's County also operates within the framework of the Sustainable Growth and Agricultural Preservation Act, passed by the General Assembly in 2012, which established growth tiers and rural preservation policies intended to protect agricultural, conservation, and rural lands throughout Maryland.⁶ Under this framework, portions of Prince George's County are designated as Tier IV rural preservation areas intended for agricultural preservation, resource

¹ [Prince George's County Council - Reference No. CR-039-2026](#)

² [Maryland's VALUE-ADDED AGRICULTURE and agritourism](#)

³ [MD Statewide Agritourism](#)

⁴ *Ibid*

⁵ [01.01.2025.18 | Library of Maryland Regulations](#)

⁶ [Sustainable Growth & Preservation Act of 2012 SB-236](#)

conservation, and protection of natural lands.⁷ The County is also located along several historic tourism and heritage corridors, including the Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail and Byway⁸ and the Anacostia Trails Heritage Area.⁹

Relevant legislation from other local jurisdictions:

Montgomery County

In Montgomery County, 93,000 acres, or almost one-third of the County is designated as the Agricultural Reserve. The Agricultural Reserve was created in 1980 and has been zoned for agriculture as its primary use.¹⁰ Within the Agricultural Reserve zoning limits development to one house per 25 acres. Additionally, there are permanent easements that restrict residential, industrial, and commercial development.¹¹ As such, Montgomery County has one of the highest percentages of farmland under agricultural land preservation easements in the country. These protections allow the Agricultural Reserve, despite the high cost of living, and pressures from encroaching development, to successfully maintain Montgomery County's agricultural industry, protect large quantities of contiguous farmland and support local farmers. Other neighboring counties with agricultural preservation programs include Howard and Calvert, both of which have over 20% of their land zoned for agricultural purposes and protected from development.¹²

Resource Personnel:

- Leroy Maddox, Legislative Attorney
- Ayana Crawford, Chief of Staff, Office of At-Large Council Member Wala Blegay

Discussion/Policy Analysis

CR-039-2026 would encourage the collaboration of State, regional and local entities to promote agritourism in identified areas of the County. Within one year of the resolution's adoption, the collaborative partnership will be required to produce a report detailing their collaborative plan for agritourism promotion and the status of those efforts within the County.

For local family farms to be sustainable, they must be profitable and need to have opportunities to grow. The USDA defines a small family farm as one that earns less than \$350,000 in gross farm income in a year, while a medium size family farm earns between \$350,000 and \$999,000 in gross farm income in a year.¹³ According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, Prince George's County

⁷ Ibid

⁸ [Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail \(U.S. National Park Service\)](#)

⁹ [Anacostia Trails Heritage Area \(U.S. National Park Service\)](#)

¹⁰ [The Ag Reserve - Office of Agriculture - Montgomery County, MD](#)

¹¹ Ibid

¹² [Characteristics-of-Farms-and-Farmland.pdf](#)

¹³ [Census22_HL_FamilyFarms_FINAL.pdf](#)

has 381 farms, with an average size of 86 acres.¹⁴ In 2006, the number of farms in the County had been 454.¹⁵ According to the USDA, the national average for a small farm is 231 acres.¹⁶

Southern Maryland in general, and Prince George's County in particular, has seen a steady decline in the overall number of acres under tilth, particularly since the Tobacco Buyout in 2000.¹⁷ The local farm economy has felt economic challenges similar to those faced by farmers nationwide, worsened by the increased living costs and land prices near the nation's capital. Low commodity prices and rising farm costs have been a common trend for traditional farm commodities like corn and soybeans, two of the country's most common farm products currently.¹⁸

As a result of these pressures on the agricultural economy, there has been a steady trend towards alternative agricultural endeavors, also known as non-traditional agriculture, including processing of value-added products, community-supported-agriculture (CSA) and agritourism.¹⁹ As local farmers, particularly those with small or medium sized farms, look for alternative income sources to sustain their farms, many are turning to agritourism. The total number of Maryland farms with agritourism and recreational services has been steadily increasing, as is the income earned by farms involved in agritourism, increasing by over \$4.5 million dollars between 2017 and 2022.²⁰

Fruit and vegetable production is one of the state's smallest agricultural production sectors. However, it is the agricultural sector closest to consumers and accounts for most of the state's direct market sales.²¹ Fruit and vegetable production also offers some of the best opportunities for expansion of the County's agricultural sector, as consumers are looking for more opportunities to purchase organic produce and direct-from-producers food commodities. As such, a small, sustainable, pick-your-own fruit and vegetable operation could be considered the one of best formats for agritourism in the County.

A 2006 Strategic Program for Agricultural Development, prepared for the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, offered a series of recommendations for strengthening the agricultural economy of the County. One of the recommendations is to support the development of an agritourism market, noting the "tremendous opportunity for retail and tourism market development given the rapid changes in demographic characteristics (e.g., high average household income and high educational attainment) of both the County and the region."²² CR-039-2026 follows one of the suggestions made in the Strategic Program for Agricultural Development, which was to integrate with existing marketing activities in Southern Maryland, by collaborating with the Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation and the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission (SMADC).

¹⁴ [cp24033.pdf](#)

¹⁵ [Prince-Georges-County-Strategic-Program-for-Agricultural-Development-PDF](#)

¹⁶ [Small, medium, large – Does farm size really matter? - MSU Extension](#)

¹⁷ [SMADC History | Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission](#)

¹⁸ [Prince-Georges-County-Strategic-Program-for-Agricultural-Development-PDF](#)

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ [Agritourism in Maryland: What to Know | UMES Extension](#)

²¹ [Prince-Georges-County-Strategic-Program-for-Agricultural-Development-PDF](#)

²² Ibid

Fiscal Impact:

- *Direct Impact*

Adoption of CR-039-2026 is not likely to have any direct fiscal impact.

- *Indirect Impact*

Adoption of CR-039-2026 could have a positive indirect impact on the County's tax base, as additional support for agritourism within the County could lead to additional tourism dollars spent in the County, thereby strengthening and diversifying the County's economy.

- *Appropriated in the Current Fiscal Year Budget*

No.

Items for Committee Consideration:

Other potential organizations for the Council to consider partnering with to support agritourism within the County include the Prince George's County Farm Bureau, the Maryland Department of Agriculture, the Maryland-National Capital Parks and Planning Commission's Food System Planning Section, Destination Prince George's, and the Prince George's County Chamber of Commerce.

Questions for Committee Consideration:

- Which County agency will be designated to lead and coordinate the development of the agritourism promotion report?
 - What reporting requirements and performance measures should be included to ensure the report provides a comprehensive and actionable plan for promoting and expanding agritourism opportunities within the County?
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Effective Date of Proposed Legislation:

This Resolution goes into effect on the date of its adoption.

If you require additional information, or have questions about this fiscal impact statement, please reach me via phone or email.