



The Honorable Dannielle Glaros, Chair
Prince George's County Council Committee on Planning, Housing and Economic Development (PHED)
14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

March 21, 2019

Dear Committee Chair Glaros and members of the PHED Committee:

My name is Kim Rush Lynch and I am the Urban Agriculture Conservation Planner with the Prince George's Soil Conservation District, the Co-Chair of the Prince George's Food Equity Council, and a Greenbelt resident. While **CB-4-2019** is not in the purview of the District's mission, it seems it **relieves unnecessary burden for our farmers markets in Prince George's County which positively impacts the clients we serve at the District.**

In the past, I have served as the Ag Marketing Specialist for Prince George's County and have worked closely with farmers market managers and our farm and food vendors. While some farmers in the county direct wholesale or offer a Community Supported Agriculture program, many sell at farmers markets in the Washington DC Metro region. **Farmers markets serve as quality food access points and are incubators for new farmers and small value-added food businesses. Our urban farmers use farmers markets as a primary marketing outlet. If we want our farmers to succeed, we also need our markets to be successful.** Therefore, it's imperative that our regulations are in line with other neighboring jurisdictions, especially Washington D.C.

We all can agree on the importance of life safety and applaud our County for taking the current regulations seriously. However, it is helpful if it's **balanced with common sense guidelines that don't impede the success of markets and agricultural vendors, many of whom are struggling to make farming profitable.** This is the time of year when markets should be focused on filling their slots with quality vendors and community groups, planning cooking demos and other educational programs, and marketing to the public. Unfortunately, many of them are taking off significant hours from their jobs to get their permits and inspections together, while tasks that are instrumental to the success of a quality market are put at the bottom of the list.

I believe the intent of the fire code, as well as the structural and electrical inspections, was designed in the spirit of larger "circus style" tents rather than smaller 10ft. by 10ft. tents that would be used at most farmers markets. Our farmers markets have ten to twenty of these smaller tents, and their well-thought out layouts allow for appropriate ingress and egress as well as address potential fire safety issues with cooking vendors. **While fire risk is not to be taken lightly, liability from the wind picking up a tent is a more likely scenario.** I appreciate that tent weight requirements are addressed in this legislation, not only to protect our shoppers, but as another risk management strategy for our farmers and food vendors. **CB-4-2019 provides an opportunity for prepared food vendors with cooking equipment to spend time with the fire marshal to ensure a safe set-up prior to the event.** Our fire marshal team has proved to be very dedicated to the education of our market managers and vendors, so this will provide the appropriate parties with significant one-on-one time, similar to how food trucks are treated in the County.

In closing, like many agencies in Prince George's County, the District understands there is a need for additional fresh food for improved health and economic growth along with education and outreach to the population at large. The District's Urban Agriculture Conservation Program is focusing on the health, education, economic development, and environmental benefits of urban agriculture. This land use can bring a myriad of additional benefits such as providing mental health benefits from additional green space, improved physical activity, and opportunities to educate new farmers on soil health and water conservation. Improved water filtration may reduce stormwater runoff in our urban and peri-urban areas and potentially reduce the need for expanding stormwater management infrastructure, an issue that is important to the District.

For these reasons, we support any legislation that will help expand urban agriculture opportunities in Prince George's County and **multiply the positive impacts that urban agriculture has on health, education, economic development, and environment in Prince George's County.**

Respectfully,



Kim Rush Lynch
Urban Agriculture Conservation Planner
Prince George's Soil Conservation District