



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

June 6, 2019

Good morning, Chair Glaros and members of the Committee:

My name is Kim Rush Lynch and I am the Urban Agriculture Conservation Planner with the Prince George's Soil Conservation District and a Greenbelt resident. I'm here this morning to speak in support of CB-14-2019 which **expands opportunities for urban agriculture in Prince George's County**. Many thanks to Council Member Taveras for proposing this bill which **moves up the timeline to allow our urban farmers to engage in more urban farming practices**. The expanded urban farm definition in CB-14 is very similar to the definition that recently passed in the Zoning Ordinance Rewrite.

First, I would like to thank County Council for proposing the legislation in 2016 that expanded urban agriculture in our county. **As a result of that legislation, 74% of the county allows agriculture as a permitted use!** The legislation also named the District as the technical service agency to assist urban farmers with their soil and water conservation plans which helped to spur the development of our new **Urban Agriculture Conservation** program.

This legislation refines the definition from CB-25-2016 and increases opportunities for a more diverse urban agriculture industry in Prince George's County. For example, it makes room for technologies like controlled environmental agriculture which includes growing plants efficiently in soilless media as seen in hydroponic and aquaponic operations. It also provides opportunities for rooftop farming and edible landscaping. In addition, a definition such as this will attract new urban agriculture enterprises that can **provide fresh, healthy produce to more Prince Georgians, including those who are considered low income and/or low access.**

Urban farms provide a variety of environmental and conservation benefits to urban and peri-urban areas in Prince George's County including:

- increased pervious surfaces and creative water harvesting techniques which reduce stormwater runoff and potentially reduce the need for additional stormwater management infrastructure in certain areas;
- soil health improvements to reduce soil erosion and conserve natural resources;
- the promotion of green space in congested communities;

- improved air and water quality;
- reduced carbon emissions by providing residents with food where they live;
- increased pollinators, soil microorganisms, and other elements that enhance biodiversity and improve soil health;
- food waste reduction through composting;
- and even the reduction of urban heat.

In closing, **the District has worked with 12 urban Ag cooperators over the last year and will continue to provide technical services to urban farmers to ensure they have the knowledge and resources to provide the benefits** I just mentioned. The District supports legislation that expands the implementation of soil and water conservation practices and urban agriculture opportunities in Prince George's County which amplifies **their positive impacts on the 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