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| <b>FROM</b> | NAME & TITLE          | CHERYL CASCIANI, CHAIR, <i>Cheryl Casciani</i><br>COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABILITY | CITY of<br>BALTIMORE |  |
|             | AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS | DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING<br>417 EAST FAYETTE STREET, 8 <sup>th</sup> Floor       |                      |   |
|             | SUBJECT               | City Council Bill 14-0420 Property Tax Credits Urban Agriculture               | DATE:                | September 16, 2014  |
|             | <b>TO</b>             |  |                      |   |

The Honorable President and Members of City Council  
 City Hall 4<sup>th</sup> floor  
 100 N. Holliday Street

Please be advised of the following comments offered on behalf of the Commission on Sustainability on City Council Bill 14-0420 Property Tax Credits – Urban Agriculture.

The intent of this bill addresses the following goals of the Baltimore Sustainability Plan as approved by the City Council on March 2, 2009, and the following recommendation of the Homegrown Baltimore: Grow Local urban agriculture plan, adopted on November 21, 2013 by the Planning Commission:

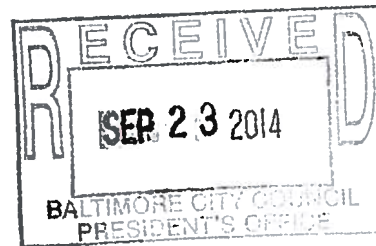
- Sustainability Plan, Greening Goal #2: Establish Baltimore as a leader in sustainable, local food systems.
- Sustainability Plan, Green Economy Goal #2: Make Baltimore a center for green business.
- Homegrown Baltimore: Grow Local Recommendation #1G: Support financial relief for commercial farms on privately-owned vacant land by adopting provisions of Maryland Tax Code Section 9-253 ‘Urban Agricultural Property’.

CCB 14-0420 will assist in creating a more sustainable and resilient Baltimore by providing financial relief to commercial farms on privately-owned land within the city. Commercial urban farms provide a myriad of benefits to the city by putting vacant properties into productive use, providing a source of locally produced food, and creating green jobs.

Profit margins on farming are slim. In recognition of this, the State Department of Assessment and Taxation’s Agricultural Use Assessment offers a deep tax discount for farms -- however, this assessment comes with a minimum size requirement of three acres, and thus the vast majority of urban farms are unable to take advantage of it. CCB 14-0420 provides the solution to this problem, and puts urban farms on an equal financial footing with rural farms in the region. It also provides for oversight by the City, and for the potential to discontinue the tax credit if it proves to be ineffective at its intended purpose.

The Commission on Sustainability supports CCB 14-0420 and encourages a favorable response by the City Council.

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