

# BALTIMORE CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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## **City Council Bill 21-0064R** **Urban Farming**

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Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) appreciates the Baltimore City Council's attention to Council Bill 21-0064R, which seeks to consider possible revisions of current standards to allow urban farms to operate safely and successfully in Baltimore City. Baltimore City's vibrant urban farm scene has an important role to play in promoting not only food, land, and environmental justice in our city – but also education and youth well-being.

City Schools' [Farm to School \(F2S\) program](#) promotes experiential education that connects students to nature and food systems. Reflective of the priorities outlined in the City Schools [Blueprint for Success](#), meaningful F2S experiences can be transformative for students' social, emotional, and physical wellness, and can contribute to their academic success. Additionally, these experiences empower youth to understand, engage with, and co-create their food system in ways that can improve food security and sovereignty, while also preparing youth to be systems thinkers and social changemakers.

City Schools' district-owned Great Kids Farm (GKF) is a hub for hands-on F2S opportunities, but in isolation, our reach is limited. Collaboration with and support for local urban farms and school gardens is thus a critical pillar of our F2S strategy. Youth-centric work hinging on the leadership of local farmers includes:

- The Baltimore Compost Collective at Filbert Street Garden (*District 10*) working with students at Benjamin Franklin High School and leading site-based workshops elsewhere;
- Plantation Park Heights (*District 6*) creating programs for students at Creative City Public Charter School, Fallstaff Elementary School, the Crossroads School, and beyond;
- Backyard Basecamp at BLISS Meadows (*District 2*) working with students in the Hamilton area;
- The team at Whitelock Community Farm (*District 7*) offering programs for Dorothy I. Height Elementary School students; and
- Gardens supported by Central Baltimore Partnership (*District 12*) leading educational sessions for students within walking distance – from Dallas F. Nicholas, Sr.,

Elementary School, Cecil Elementary School, and Margaret Brent Elementary/Middle School.

The community leaders affiliated with the groups mentioned above provide meaningful opportunities for young people at their sites and show students that food production and land stewardship can happen in their own communities. These community leaders have succeeded despite restrictive policies and constant challenges involving land use, funding, staffing, etc.

By giving utmost flexibility to urban farmers in Baltimore City, the City Council can contribute to the Baltimore Children's Cabinet's [goals](#) (e.g., decrease food insecurity) and align its decisions with the Department of Planning's [Equity Action Plan](#). Simplifying rules and protocols for urban farms and gardens will ensure that these urban spaces remain oases of health, growth, and safety for Baltimore City youth.

We thank the City Council for their attention to Council Bill 21-0064R and look forward to further discussions.