

**Jeannie
Anderson**
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Re: 21-0064R - Investigational Hearing - Urban Farming

Dear Madam Chair & Members of the Health, Environment & Technology Committee,

I am a homeowner in northeast Baltimore City and an urban farmer and gardener. Over the 12-½ years I have lived at 3500 Gibbons Avenue, gardening has brought so much joy to me, to my family, to neighbors and other community members. As a trauma survivor I find gardening - the act of working in the soil to be very therapeutic and calming. I particularly find the repetitive act of weeding to be quite calming, almost a meditation.

Our gardens have changed quite a lot over the years. We have a corner lot 1 block from the local market and have quite a bit of foot traffic most days. During the growing season, passersby - on foot and in cars - regularly stop to engage with us about the garden, ask questions, share stories about their own gardening adventures and discuss other things. Our yard has also been a gathering spot for neighborhood children who want to join us and work in the dirt, helping to plant and harvest. We've shared loads of tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers, eggplants, and squash with neighbors and passersby over the years. I never would've guessed that starting a vegetable garden would be a community builder, but it has. Our own children, now school-aged, very much enjoy working in the dirt and growing things too. We've had the opportunity to raise chickens, which was an incredible learning opportunity and provided lots of entertainment to my youngest child (age 6) during the height of COVID when there weren't other children to play with.

Spaces for growing food, building community, connection and providing opportunities for people to engage together. This promotes social-emotional learning, community building, and, in my experience, ongoing healing. In addition, urban farming and gardening increases food access, which is so critical in many communities in our city that go without access to fresh, healthy food. There are health benefits to individuals who are growing food - engaging in the physical act of planting and harvesting, getting fresh air and moving their bodies. And there are health benefits to those who eat fresh, healthy food. With the closing of rec centers, and social distancing from COVID, our young people, in particular, need positive community spaces where they can learn and grow. I request a revision to policies and procedures for providing access to green spaces for those interested. And for those tasked with enforcing laws around gardening and farming to be trauma-informed as well as knowledgeable about the act of growing food. With that being said, I request a favorable report on City Council Bill 21-0064R.

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Sincerely,
Jeannie
Anderson