

Ulysses Archie, Jr.
Baltimore Gift Economy % Fusion Partnerships, Inc.
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Re: 21-0064R - Investigational Hearing - Urban Farming

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

I am a former educator who resides with my family in southwest Baltimore City in councilmanic district 8. I have also engaged as a community-scale grower of food and a community-engaged feeder since 2012 through our community program the Baltimore Gift Economy. Our mission is to build talent and capacity in the best interest of long-term community growth.

Yes, I am in favor of [Bill 21-0064 Investigational Hearing on Urban Farming](#) to engage relevant stakeholders to brief the City Council regarding the challenges we face as farmers, growers, gardeners, and feeders to discuss possible revisions of current standards to allow urban farms to operate safely and successfully in Baltimore City.

“Where common memory is lacking, where people do not share in the same past, there can be no real community. Where community is to be formed, common memory must be created.”
GEORGES ERASMUS, Native American Dene Elder

The covid-19 pandemic has challenged our thinking as a society to adjust our lives to meet the challenge of scarcity and food security. Now is the time to use the resource granted by the [American Rescue Plan](#) that infuses governmental support at every level of the economy. We have the money and now is the time to act to readdress current standards, procedures, policies, and practices that are inequitable in government agencies.

To give context to my testimony I will start with a question. I have been asking myself, why is [violent crime surging in Baltimore City](#)? What is the gateway drug to violence? It is not what most people think when they associate drugs and violence.

I believe the answer to the gateway drug question has its roots in the lifelong effects of early childhood adversity. Poverty without community supports is a risk factor that creates prolonged activation of [toxic stress](#) effects ([Jack P. Shonkoff, MD; Andrew S. Garner, MD, PhD; Pediatrics \(2012\)](#)) and how it manifested into a [trauma response](#) as it transports you from the present back in time to a lived experience in your “body of culture” as described in “My Grandmother’s Hands” published in 2017 by [Resmaa Menakem: Healer, New York Times Best-Selling Author, Trauma Specialist](#).

In an article was written by Tim Prudente in 2016 entitled “[Chickens return to Green St. school](#),” W. Baltimore academy regroups after violence claimed poultry. This article

struck me as a missed opportunity to intervene and to interrupt the cycle of violence and [childhood trauma](#). The structural inequity of institutional and governmental safety supports was somehow overlooked in these instances, opening the flood gates to perhaps more violence in the community. I wonder if this incident could have been handled differently? Perhaps we will never know the outcome of such an event in the lives of these community youths.

Trauma compromises our ability to engage with others, by replacing patterns of connection with patterns of protection. -Steven Porges

We need to build a bridge from school efforts of social-emotional learning to green spaces in our local communities, in the absents of restricted services for school-age children outside of school.

We know now that some of the responses that these agencies engage or fail to engage in servicing citizens have the potential to traumatize Baltimore City residents; the [Elijah Cummings Healing City Act](#) identifies policy changes to better position Baltimore as a trauma-responsive city. While engaging with Maryland State Government Agency during my recent appointee of the Governor's Offices [Trauma-Informed Care Commission](#) under [SB0299](#) my colleagues and I are working statewide to address the delivery of services by government agencies. We know that the process of becoming a trauma-informed responsive city takes time to shift culture, practice, and policies.

Baltimore City uses the [smart city model](#) of customer service to address issues residents have as non-emergency, by having all calls processed through 311. In my opinion, the 311 system mirrors the "[The Meritorious Manumission Act of 1710](#)." This puts ordinary citizens sometimes unknowingly in the position of weaponizing Baltimore City services for personal benefits. Instead of working to mitigate disputes or community issues through other forms and ways of mediation. People sometimes opt to control or receive these material benefits as long as they appear to do "good deeds" for the maintenance of the customer service power structure. The perceived benefit of control by some who intentionally do this to other community members creates distrust among everyone involved.

Sometimes, in practice in municipal response in my personal case, animal husbandry activities, it interferes with an emerging need to build a context for a meaningful cross-cultural, cross-disciplinary approach to mitigate the effects of Trauma in individuals and community spaces, especially during a global pandemic.

In closing, here are some perspectives on issues we growers and feeders to consider in this discourse about Urban Farming with Baltimore City Limits:

- [Social Determinates of Health](#) - Equity
- Establish [green spaces](#) as healing spaces for community well-being
- Increase the establishment of green space in all communities

- Training of Animal control staff in the identification of basic farm animal species overall health and establishing metrics to achieving trauma-informed responsive service delivery
- Understanding of appropriate animal care
- Establish grower led centered, bodies of culture a group to assist in making assessments for animal husbandry practices
- Appropriate identification of species and that species' specific needs
- Consider the impact of [Covid-19 on students well-being](#)
- Willingness to seek information from experts rather than personal opinions of others
- Growing plants and animals with environmentally sound methods as opposed to industrialized perspectives. What reflects nature?
- Entering spaces with curiosity rather than perceived wrong and animosity
- Reduce economic barriers to growing and raising plants and animals especially in communities with food deserts and food apartheid
- Reconsider the spaying and neutering guidelines for isolated animals
- Reconsider land usage designations for inclusion and separation of animals
- Making space for community-scale agriculture for individuals and families
- Making green space for education and social/emotional learning
- Acknowledging that complaints made are a perspective not an absolute
- Sharing models as economic models

Public funding for established growers supports:

- Community Awareness around farming growing and feeders role in the community
- Greenspaces
- land sovereignty
- Public Processing Center Maker-Space (foodstuff, value-added products, establish a slaughterhouse for small-scale animal growers)
- Direct support and technical assistants farmers, growers, and feeders serving the community

With that being said, I look forward to a favorable stakeholder engagement on City Council Bill 21-0064R.

Respectfully,

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