

January 9, 2024

Members, Montgomery County Council

I am a resident of the Ag Reserve (AR). I am opposed to ZTA 23-09-Farming and I am asking that it be stopped at the upcoming hearing. There are so many problems with this ZTA that it should not go forward in any form.

The proposal is not consistent with the purpose of the AR and in fact it would change the very definition of farming. The proposed ZTA does not meet any of the fundamental purposes of the AR to preserve working farms, open space and water resources. If this ZTA is enacted, it would authorize the construction of up to 10 luxury resort lodging structures on farm properties in the AR. They could be constructed anywhere in the AR and would put prime soils and land encumbered by agriculture easements funded by taxpayers at risk. These structures would have no connection to farming, the foundational purpose of the AR.

I have spent a good part of my life outdoors, much of it camping in places that provide a better understanding and appreciation of nature and the world we live in. The non-farming landowner behind this ZTA described his vision in a WTOP interview as *“going to the Ritz-Carlton or the Four Seasons” where each unit would be “like a small cabin,” but cushier. “Like any high-end hotel” but “not over the top.”* Providing a camping experience that would enhance visitors’ understanding and appreciation of farming and all the AR has to offer is not the goal of this proposal.

I ask that you stop this proposal from going forward.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Robert W. Wilbur