

Good evening. I speak to you tonight as a 10 year MoCo resident, co-owner of an organic vegetable and grain family farm, on-farm researcher of carbon drawdown and as an individual who is attempting to secure her family's livelihood.

You have each received emails in support of ZTA 23-09 with revisions from Ms. Cather, Ag Reserve food farmer and Ms. Moss-Pham, social and environmental justice advocate. Combined, they capture all the reasons why incidental overnight stays need to be part of Moco's definition of agritourism in concurrence with House Bill 558.

In addition, please understand that the only tangible product an organic food farmer has is from the land we work. Our income depends on the care of this precious resource, namely the soil, from which Nature manufactures our product, food, another increasingly precious resource. Agritourism, with all of its many facets, is the lifeboat through which we can stay afloat among cost-cutting resource depletion and rampant manufacturing-derived pollution. Please ensure that this lifeline is freely available to all of Moco's current and future farmers.

I based each of the following ten recommended revisions on personal experience gained while hosting over 30 weekend long guests, consisting of families, friends and youth groups who booked overnight outdoor stays with tours through HipCamp, a service similar to Airbnb.

I also took into account recommendations made by Montgomery Planning in its recent December review of ZTA 23-09 as well as feedback from local environmentally-conscious farmers.

My support of ZTA 23-09 is entirely provisional on the implementations of these revisions.

Because I don't have time to present each one in detail, I have submitted them as part of the written record and via email along with my testimony. I would encourage you to look at them in more detail as you proceed with the revision process.

Meanwhile, here is an abbreviated version of the three most important ones.

First and foremost, require the following: a permit through DPS, an agricultural assessment and certification as a Maryland Local Farm. This stipulation will ensure that requirements are met for permission to host incidental overnight stays, as well as ensuring appropriate oversight once that permission is granted.

Secondly, the amendment needs inclusivity. The current language refers only to farms in the Ag Reserve which make up the majority but not the entirety of agritourism-eligible farms.

Third, mandate that overnight housing consist exclusively of cabins, tents, yurts, mobile units or other semi-permanent utility-free structures – in other words, accommodations with MINIMAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT.

ZTA 23-09 is an impactful amendment, one that can help ensure the financial security of food farmers for decades to come. In our current climate crisis, consider the enormous value that holds. Thank you for your due diligence in hearing all of these testimonies and for making House Bill 558 a reality.

Revised Stipulations for ZTA 23-09

1. **Require a permit through DPS**

The applicant submits a complete Agricultural Farmstay Zoning Permit Application, requiring MD agricultural assessment and MD Certified Local Farm status, to the DPS who will assign a project planner to review the application and verify it is complete for processing. The Planner verifies that the proposed Agricultural farmstay will comply with all Performance Standards and requirements. Once compliance is verified, a zoning permit approval letter will be issued to the applicant which must be renewed annually with proof of previous year's farm income.

Note: The above wording was adapted from Sonoma County's Agricultural Farmstays Agricultural Homestay Standards and seeks to ensure the validity of available farm-related activities in conjunction with Incidental Outdoor Stays. The minimum requirements offer a second layer of insurance that property owners are indeed 'farms' as defined by the State of Maryland.

2. **Promote county-wide inclusivity**

Create two categories of farms; ag-zoned and residential-zoned. Align code requirements with existing code and the shared farm characteristics of that particular zone.

Note: Current language refers only to farms in the Ag Reserve which make up the majority but definitely not the entirety of agritourism-eligible farms.

3. **Overnight housing requirements**

Housing must be cabins, tents, yurts, mobile units or other semi-permanent utility-free structures

Note: These housing types will ensure minimal environmental impact.

4. **Structure(s) footprint**

Residentially-zoned farms: 200 Sq ft

Note: This 200 sq ft maximum footprint is identical to the existing code for accessory structures in residential zones.

5. **Structure density (#/site)**

Residentially-zoned farms: 1/acre up to a maximum of 10 for residentially-zoned farms; if structures are camping tents, maximum of 10 per property.

Note: The allowance for tents in residentially-zoned farms would facilitate youth/school group visits

6. **Structure(s) capacity (persons per structure)**

All structures: 4 people (one adult minimum); Tents: 6 people (one adult minimum)

7. **Structure(s) in relation to primary residence**

Must exist in separate locations

8. Maximum weekly residence within "incidental outdoor stay" structure

Guests must not exceed a 7-night stay

9. Electric provisions

No more than two dedicated 20-amp, 120/125-volt circuits in a weatherproof outlet per site. No generators allowed.

10. Well and Septic

Guests may use resident's existing recorded septic or MoCo-permitted NSF composting toilets.