

Leaders of the Montgomery County Agricultural Community

June 25, 2015

Dear County Council PHED Committee Members:

On behalf of the leaders of the agricultural community we want to thank the County Council PHED Committee for your decisions during the June 22, 2015 PHED Committee work session on Bill 25-15.

The agricultural community is excited about your decision in supporting the County Executive's recommendation to create the new Office of Agriculture and include all of the components and programs to assist farmers and enhance the agricultural economy.

We acknowledge that there are many moving parts of the Bill 25-15 that will need to be addressed to create the new Office of Agriculture and we offer our assistance in answering any questions you may have to make sure all the details are addressed.

The farm community is committed to working with the newly created Economic Development Corporation (EDC). The Agricultural Advisory Committee will communicate and coordinate with the Board of Directors of the EDC to make sure the Board is in the loop of communication on all matters relating to agriculture in the County.

We will work with the Administration and the Office of Agriculture to fill the vacant Agricultural Services Navigator position as soon as possible. We will also work to address our recommendation that the Office of Agriculture will need sufficient financial resources to be effective as a separate Executive agency. These resources include funds for programs and financial and administrative staff. These additional resources will be responsible for budgeting, finance, procurement and other administrative functions that will support the office as Montgomery County is doing now. It is important to realize that transferring the existing staff from the Department's Agricultural Services Division to a separate Office of Agriculture does not mean it can function effectively as a separate office as there were many administrative functions that were handled by other Department of Economic Development staff.

Thank you again for your support and for the opportunity to participate in the review of Bill 25-15. We would be happy to answer any additional questions you may have.

Respectfully Submitted,



President, Montgomery County Farm Bureau-MCFB

David Weitzer

Chairman, Agricultural Advisory Committee-AAC

Robert F. Cind Jr

Chairman, Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board-APAB

Michael B. Jamison

Board Member, Montgomery Agricultural Producers-MAP