

Public Hearing Testimony regarding SRA 20-01
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Dear Councilmembers,

Thank you for the opportunity to appear and offer my testimony today. My name is David Harris, and along with my wife Megan Draheim we are the owners and co-founders of Song Dog Spirits, LLC. I am here today to support Subdivision Regulation Amendment 21-01, which would remove the requirement to subdivide agricultural land and record a plat prior to getting commercial permits.

We have been working for several years to establish our distillery initially in Rockville, but with a building and permits in hand, we unfortunately lost our financing due to COVID last spring. We've pivoted to building a farm distillery, bringing us closer to the County agricultural products that have always been at the center of our spirits and our mission. We had invested millions of dollars in developing our previous site, and we are in the process of doing the same for our farm distillery.

This amendment has the potential to shave up to a year off our timeline and to save us hundreds of thousands of dollars, reducing our barriers to entry into this market. There are plentiful hurdles to opening a business like ours, from the federal government on down. Helping with this hurdle can help farm alcohol producers of all sizes, and I firmly believe farm alcohol producers are a tremendous benefit to the county in many ways. We're committed to working closely with Montgomery County farmers for almost all of our ingredients; even though our distillery is not up and running yet, we've already worked with local farmers to grow two crop cycles totaling hundreds of thousands of pounds of grain. We will employ a number of full time employees and dozens of hourly employees, and we expect our distillery to be a destination that will draw visitors and their spending power from Washington, DC and other surrounding counties. We also believe that we and others like us will help build community within the County as we provide a family-friendly gathering point for socializing and celebrating.

Farm alcohol producers yield a range of benefits for Montgomery County, despite the many hurdles we have to overcome to get up and running. Easing the burden meaningfully by passing SRA 21-01 will help us get up and running and will encourage others to follow suit, further supporting Montgomery County agriculture.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this amendment and for your time.