



## **AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

April 21, 2015

The Honorable Isiah Leggett  
Montgomery County Executive  
101 Monroe Street 2<sup>nd</sup> floor  
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: Reorganization of the Department of Economic Development

Dear County Executive Leggett:

On behalf of Montgomery County's agricultural leaders and farm operators, I am writing to request a meeting with you to discuss the concerns of the local agricultural industry as you initiate the reorganization of the Department of Economic Development ("DED").

As you know, in 1973 the Montgomery County Agricultural Advisory Committee ("AAC") was created to advise County Executive James P. Gleason and Council on all matters related to agriculture. As chair of the AAC, I have experienced—first-hand—the benefits of staffing our committee with public sector employees that cannot only speak the language of farmers, but also understand the internal workings of the county government. Locating the agricultural services division within a non-regulatory government agency has given us an invaluable seat at the table.

We understand that there are many moving pieces as you implement the reorganization of DED, but the potential impact on local farmers has been disconcerting to our colleagues. So, the AAC has agreed to begin conversations about which government services and delivery methods are vital to us as an industry, which things could be improved upon and which types of new services, regulations or business opportunities could help our farms evolve and grow.

Working in the agricultural industry has never been easy, but our future is still looking bright in Montgomery County thanks to the strong relationships between farmers and the county government's numerous experts, programs and resources. Therefore, based on the limited amount of information we have at this time, we recommend that Agricultural Services remain in the public sector, although we are interested in discussing potential opportunities that a new economic development organization could create.

The AAC thanks you for your continued support of local farmers, and we look forward to meeting you soon to discuss the opportunities to strengthen the agricultural industry in Montgomery County.

Sincerely,

  
David Weitzer, Chairman

Cc:

George Lechliden, Chairman MSCD

Robert Butz, Vice-Chair MSCD

Lonnie Luther, President MCFB

Bob Cissel, Chairman APAB

Randy Stabler, Chairman, MAP

Courtney Buchholtz, New Farmer Project

Amanda Cather, New Farmer Project

Doug Tregoning, Agronomy Educator-UME

Chuck Schuster, Commercial Horticulture-UME

David Plummer-MSCD District Manager

Sally Sternbach, Acting Director-DED

Sarah Miller, Capital Projects Manager-DED

John Zawitoski, Farmland Preservation-DED

Jeremy Criss, Ag Services Manager-DED