

Zawitoski, John

To: Criss, Jeremy
Subject: RE: Agricultural Advisory Committee comments in Support of Bill 25-15 with amendments

Attachment D

From: Criss, Jeremy
Sent: Monday, June 08, 2015 4:26 PM
To: Leventhal's Office, Councilmember; Floreen's Office, Councilmember; Berliner's Office, Councilmember; Rice's Office, Councilmember; Elrich's Office, Councilmember; Navarro's Office, Councilmember; Riemer's Office, Councilmember; Katz's Office, Councilmember; Hucker's Office, Councilmember
Cc: Sesker, Jacob; Drummer, Bob; 'weitzer@erols.com'; 'Barbara Weitzer' (weitzer@starpower.net); Zawitoski, John; 'Lonnie Luther'
Subject: RE: Agricultural Advisory Committee comments in Support of Bill 25-15 with amendments

Dear County Council Members,
Attached please find the letter from the Montgomery County Agricultural Advisory Committee in support of Bill 25-15 with suggested amendments.
David Weitzer, Chair of the AAC will be testifying tomorrow as part of the public hearing and he will present the views of the AAC.
Please let us know if you have any questions.
Thanks J

Jeremy V. Criss
Agricultural Services Manager
Department of Economic Development
Agricultural Services Division
18410 Muncaster Road
Derwood, Maryland 20855
301-590-2830 (Office)
301-943-9766 (Cell)
301-590-2839 (Fax)
jeremy.criss@montgomerycountymd.gov
<http://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/agsservices>
CONNECT WITH Agricultural Services





AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

June 8, 2015

The Honorable George Leventhal
Montgomery County Council President
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Re: Bill 25-15 Economic Development-Reorganization-Montgomery Economic Development Corporation

Dear Council President Leventhal:

On behalf of the Montgomery County Agricultural Advisory Committee-AAC please accept this letter as our testimony encouraging the County Council to incorporate our suggested amendments before approving Bill 25-15.

Referring to lines 216 and 217 of the bill, it states the AAC-Committee must: after conferring with the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation on matters relating to agricultural business advise the Executive and Council on all matters affecting agriculture in the County. The AAC recommends the Bill should state the following: the AAC-Committee must: after conferring with the Office of Agriculture on matters relating to agricultural business advise the Executive and Council on all matters affecting agriculture in the County.

In 1973, the 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 can speak the language of farmers, but also understand the internal workings of the county government and have an understanding of agriculture. Locating the AAC and staff within the Office of Agriculture will provide us an invaluable seat at the table.

Referring to line 487 of the bill, it states the Economic Development Corporation's programs must include: enhancing the agricultural economy. The AAC is concerned that the EDC will not be familiar with or have expertise in the agricultural industry and we question how the EDC will enhance the agricultural economy. The AAC strongly feels the Office of Agriculture will be much better equipped to enhance the agricultural economy. The AAC therefore recommends the Bill should imply the following - the Economic Development Corporation's programs must include: supporting and promoting the Office of Agriculture to enhance the agricultural economy.

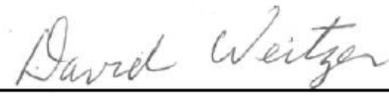
Creating the Office of Agriculture will provide tremendous opportunities to further promote the Agricultural Reserve and show case our County farmers. The AAC has begun discussions on programs that could be improved and which types of new services, regulations or business opportunities could help our 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.

The AAC welcomes the Office of Agriculture because it will remain in the public sector and we also welcome potential opportunities that a new Economic Development Corporation can create.

The AAC thanks the County Council for this opportunity to present our amendments to Bill 25-15 and we strongly encourage you to incorporate them into the Bill.

Sincerely,


David Weitzer David Weitzer, Chairman