



# Howard County

## *Internal Memorandum*

SUBJECT: Council Testimony and Fiscal Impact Statement  
Emergency Appropriation – Farmer Grants

TO: Brandee Ganz  
Chief Administrative Officer

FROM: Jennifer Jones, CEO  
Howard County Economic Development Authority

James Zoller, Administrator  
Office of Agriculture

DATE: August 20, 2024

The Howard County Economic Development Authority, along with the Howard County Office of Agriculture, express their support for Council Bill No. 49-2024, which will appropriate \$1,000,000 in Agricultural Preservation and Promotion Funds to a grant program for farmers impacted by recent heat and drought conditions.

Losses stemming from extreme weather conditions have tested the resilience of Howard County farmers this summer. These challenges have reverberated across various farming sectors, including commodity crop farms, produce growers, and hay producers.

Howard County is experiencing the detrimental effects of climate change. The Maryland State Climatologist reported that mean temperatures in Howard County reached 3.6°F above normal in June and 3.3°F above normal in July, making it the third hottest June and fifth hottest July in Howard County's history. This extreme heat was coupled with drought conditions brought on by rainfall that was roughly half normal levels over the same period of time.

For commodity crop farmers, the situation has been exacerbated by soaring input costs—such as seed, fuel, and fertilizer—paired with persistently low crop prices. Produce farmers have faced additional hurdles, incurred higher irrigation expenses while witnessed a decline in visitors to their pick-your-own facilities due to the relentless heat. Similarly, hay farmers are grappling with reduced harvests as drought conditions persist, and the timing of their third cutting is now at risk of frost damage. The repercussions of these losses are significant, particularly for livestock farms, which will experience elevated feed and hay prices and a shortage of availability.

Local farmers have shared sobering accounts of crop loss and increasing operating costs that threaten the health of their businesses and way of life. It is imperative that we stand together to address these pressing challenges and ensure that our farmers can continue to thrive amidst the adversities presented by this year's extreme weather.

This \$1,000,000 appropriation from the Agricultural Preservation and Promotion Fund will underwrite a grant program designed to provide vital support to our farmers who have faced significant challenges due to this year's extreme weather conditions. This program aims to alleviate some of the financial pressures created by this summer's weather.

This initiative is not just a lifeline; it is a commitment to sustaining agriculture in our community, empowering farmers to continue their invaluable work and contribute to the richness of our local economy. Together, this grant funding will foster resilience and support the backbone of our agricultural landscape.

Fiscal Impact

The fiscal impact of this legislation is \$1,000,000, using fund balance in the Agricultural Preservation and Promotion Fund.