



## **Philadelphia Food Policy Advisory Council Testimony in support of Bill No. 160523**

Thank you Councilwoman Blackwell and all members of the Committee for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Amy Laura Cahn, I am the Co-Chair of the Philadelphia Food Policy Advisory Council (FPAC) and a member of FPAC's Urban Agriculture Subcommittee. FPAC facilitates the development of responsible policies that improve access for all Philadelphia residents to culturally appropriate, nutritionally sound, and affordable food that is grown locally through environmentally sustainable practices. The FPAC Urban Agriculture Subcommittee guides the City of Philadelphia to develop and implement innovative laws and policies to support the conversion of Philadelphia's vacant and underutilized lands into sustainable community assets that increase food security and sovereignty for all Philadelphia residents. The subcommittee engages diverse stakeholders to inform recommendations and make current policies more transparent.

On behalf of FPAC I strongly recommend that Council approve the proposed stormwater legislation, Bill No. 160523, introduced by Councilwoman Sánchez, which will provide an exemption from charges relating to stormwater management and disposal for community gardens.

Research conducted in major cities such as New York City, Baltimore, and Detroit, shows that market farms and community gardens can decrease stormwater runoff. Eliminating stormwater fees for community gardens makes Philadelphia a leader in removing barriers for urban agriculture while continuing to reduce the amount of polluted stormwater entering our already taxed combined sewer system. Gardens also offer opportunities for installation of additional green stormwater infrastructure, such as rain gardens that manage runoff from the right-of-way and contribute to the aesthetic appeal of garden entrances and perimeters.

Urban agriculture, including community gardens and market farms, creates community assets that provide many benefits and improve the quality of life for Philadelphia's residents. Such benefits include, but are not limited to, increasing access to healthy food, open space, and opportunities for physical activity, as well as managing stormwater.

Stormwater fees have been an ongoing challenge for community gardens, market farms, and other community-led urban agriculture spaces, which are largely run by community stewards, volunteering their time to maintain and transform vacant properties to improve their neighborhoods, all with limited financial resources. The proposed legislation will help ease the burden and allow urban gardeners and farmers to focus on growing food for their communities as well as contribute to the economic and social landscape of Philadelphia.

We applaud Councilwoman Sánchez and Philadelphia Water for recognizing the stormwater management benefits of urban agriculture and supporting Philadelphia's



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gardening community, and we are thrilled that gardens will be exempt from stormwater fees moving forward.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to testify today, and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

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Amy Laura Cahn  
*FPAC Co-Chair*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nancy Kohn'.

Nancy Kohn  
*FPAC Urban Agriculture Subcommittee Co-Chair*

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