

My name is Yuki Kato. I am a resident of Ward 6 and Assistant Professor of Sociology at Georgetown University. I have been conducting research on urban agriculture over a decade, including in Washington DC, and today I am here to advocate for more financial and institutional support for the Office of Urban Agriculture, and also pose questions about the existing policies on urban agriculture.

DC is one of the few cities in the US with a designated Office of Urban Agriculture, and thus far this small office has done an amazing work extending support to local urban farmers under Kate Lee's leadership, including organizing RootingDC, the prominent, free annual event for urban gardeners and farmers in the District, and leading the Urban Agriculture Working Group as a part of the Food Policy Council. But the work of the office with the most direct impact has been the infrastructure and operations grant. It is my understanding that the office received dozens of applications each year for the grant, with a totaling request funding that far surpassed the \$68K that was available. So my first recommendation is to increase this funds significantly to ensure that the growers in DC are able to receive funding to start or continue their work.

In my research, I find that land access and tenure have been consistent and most challenging aspects of urban agriculture in any city. DC is no exception, even though it appears that the city is supportive of urban agriculture, exemplified by the passing of the Urban Farming and Food Security Amendment Act of 2014. More recently, one of the goals of the Strategic Plan 2.0, was "By 2032, put 20 additional acres, including public right of way and rooftops, under cultivation for growing food." Yet my research has shown that none of the public land lease programs has resulted in an establishment of operating urban farm/garden in the city. I recommend a closer examination of why it has been so difficult to find the publicly-owned spaces for lease for urban agriculture, and facilitate identification of more publicly-owned land to be used for urban agriculture. [2021 research](#) by researchers who were at UDC at the time found that almost 10 square miles (2575 ha) of the land in DC can be converted to urban agricultural spaces. So there should be a way to expand the capacity of urban farmers in the city to gain access to the spaces to grow food and community, and the Office of Urban Ag need additional staffing to expand its capacity.

To this effect, I am here to caution against any attempt to pit urban agriculture and affordable housing against each other, as it has historically been the pattern in many cities whenever there is perceived or real shortage of space. I recommend Office of Urban Agriculture to collaborate, rather than having to compete, with DC Housing Authority (DCHA) and DC Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) in supporting urban agricultural activities in the District. On this topic, I am aware that there Urban Farming and Food Security Amendment Act

includes tax abatement program, but it is my understanding that the program has not been used to its maximum capacity. Again, I argue this is due to the limited capacity of Office of Urban Agriculture to engage in more extensive outreach and to engage in a cross-agency communication. Thus I underscore additional funding to Office of Urban Agriculture to expand its capacity by hiring additional staff.

In closing, I want to emphasize that the office of urban agriculture in DC has been extending support for urban growers for the last few years, but to be more effective it could use more funding to hire additional staff. Thank you.