



# CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

---

*Environmental Protection and Restoration  
Environmental Education*

## **House Bill 269**

Department of Agriculture - Urban Agriculture Grant Program

Date: January 15, 2021

To: House Environment and Transportation Committee

Position: **Support**

Contact: Carmera Thomas,  
Baltimore Program Manager,  
at 443.482.2011 or  
[carmerathomas@cbf.org](mailto:carmerathomas@cbf.org)

---

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS HB 269**. This bill would establish the Urban Agriculture Grant program in the Department of Agriculture to support urban farming and improve access to urban-grown foods.

### **Local regenerative food production may reduce pollution into the Chesapeake Bay**

The agriculture sector accounts for nearly one third of global greenhouse gas emissions and is the largest source of non-point pollution entering the Chesapeake Bay. Baltimore has an existing initiative to increase production, distribution, and consumption of urban-grown foods in the City. This legislation would further the City's commitment to providing equitable access to healthy food, support locally owned businesses, promote environmental sustainability, and utilize spaces in Baltimore City to grow food on land in the City.

### **Urban Agriculture Grant Program funding may grow a greenprint within developed areas**

HB 269 requires grant recipients to distribute funding to urban agricultural producers to maintain safe, environmentally sustainable, and socially responsible practices, among other purposes. The use of property within City centers for sustainable agriculture may help improve local water quality and reduce runoff into the Chesapeake Bay. If successful, the continued investments of residents in local food providers will bolster community resilience and may help grow a greenprint of sustainable agriculture plots within the City.

### **HB 269 improves equity and access to healthy food and aligns with federal program funding policy**

This bill increases equity and access for low income and communities of color, especially for those communities with a lack of access to healthy, fresh, local food sources. Federal agricultural funding programs provide funding for urban farming practices. A next step beyond this legislation could be to incorporate eligibility for practices like hoop houses and water systems for irrigation in all relevant Maryland Department of Agriculture grant programs.

CBF supports local food purchases through its Buy Fresh Buy Local Chesapeake program which helps consumers, sustainable farms, and businesses find each other and support efforts to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay. Supporting locally grown food from sustainable farms is integral to CBF's mission to Save the Bay.

### **CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on HB 269.**

Maryland Office • Philip Merrill Environmental Center • 6 Herndon Avenue • Annapolis • Maryland • 21403  
Phone (410) 268-8816 • Fax (410) 280-3513