

Good morning. I would like to thank Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and the members of the committee for this opportunity to speak today. My name is Ada Marciniak, and the idea of having the persimmon as Maryland's official state fruit originated with me.

In fourth grade, I participated in the "If I Were Mayor" essay contest. The research I did for my writing taught me a lot about Maryland, especially its symbols.

Maryland has so many state symbols: the Baltimore Oriole, the Black-Eyed Susan, the Baltimore Checkerspot Butterfly—and there are so many more! That is what made it very confusing to me when I learned that Maryland does not have a state fruit. Florida has its orange, Georgia has its peach, but looking for Maryland's fruit, I found a blank space.

After writing my essay, my family went to visit my grandparents. Every fall, my family picks persimmons from the tree my grandmother has planted in the backyard. It's a fun bonding activity, and the fruit is delicious, perfect for eating afterwards. It was in the tree when inspiration struck me: the persimmon should be Maryland's state fruit!

Native to Maryland, the fruit trees can be found all over the state. Its commonness and place in Maryland's history make it surprising that so few Marylanders know about the American persimmon. The fruit was important to our indigenous people's culture, as Native Americans used it for food and as medicine. It also played a role in the Civil War, when the trade routes were impacted and people used the seeds as a coffee substitute.

I and my family reached out to friends and acquaintances from around Maryland to gather their opinions about my idea. Overwhelmingly, everyone was in favor of the persimmon becoming the official state fruit. Some of them have provided written testimony already. If this committee decides to give a favorable recommendation and advance the bill, we will garner more written support from all over the state to convince the body to pass this legislation.

Let me also say, this bill is budget-neutral, and from what I was told, many consider it a fun bill. Its passing would bring state goodwill.

Maryland does not have a state fruit. This bill, SB 74, will solve this, and promote awareness of the healthful persimmon. Having a state fruit will promote both state pride and culinary tourism. This is why the persimmon should become Maryland's state fruit.