

SB74 2024 testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Ada Marciniak

Position: FAV

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.

And Marciniak Maryland SB74 2024 support letter.pdf

Uploaded by: Andrzej Marciniak

Position: FAV

Maryland Senate. Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee.

2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Subject: Support for Maryland Senate Bill 74 (2024) Designating Persimmon as the Official State Fruit

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Distinguished Members of the Senate's Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

I am writing to wholeheartedly express my enthusiastic support for Maryland Senate Bill 74 (2024), which designates the **Persimmon** as the official state fruit of Maryland. As a native Maryland varietal, the Persimmon has played an integral role in our state's history, culture, and well-being.

1. A Rich Heritage: The Persimmon has been intertwined with Maryland's story since time immemorial. From the Native Peoples who first inhabited this land to settlers, Enslaved individuals, and the diverse array of international immigrants who now call Maryland home, the Persimmon has nourished and sustained generations. Its presence is a testament to our shared agricultural heritage.

2. A Culinary Treasure: In Maryland's American cuisine, the Persimmon shines. Its sweet, complex flavor graces our tables in puddings, beverages, and baked goods. Across ethnic cuisines, from Asian to European, the Persimmon adds a delightful touch to dishes. Its versatility bridges cultures and connects us through food.

3. Building Food Connections: In our heavily agricultural state, many children have lost touch with the origins of their food. The Persimmon provides an opportunity to reconnect. Imagine children gathering under Persimmon-laden branches, learning about seasons, flavors, and the joy of harvesting. Communal fruit picking fosters a sense of belonging, encourages physical activity, and promotes overall health.

4. Addressing Food Deserts: Maryland faces food deserts, where fresh, nutritious options are scarce. The Persimmon, with its rich nutritional content, can be a valuable resource. By planting Persimmon trees in community spaces, we empower residents to access wholesome food and improve their well-being.

5. Environmental Stewardship: As a native varietal, the Persimmon contributes to reforestation efforts. Its inclusion in grants supports environmental health restoration. Moreover, its canopy coverage benefits our ecosystem, providing shade, habitat, and beauty.

6. Harmonious Colors: The Persimmon's hues—ranging from deep orange to scarlet—perfectly complement Maryland's existing state symbols. Just as our flag, bird, steamed crab, butterfly, and Old Bay spice evoke pride, the Persimmon's colors resonate with our collective identity.

7. Reconnecting with Nature: By adopting the Persimmon as our state fruit, we encourage Marylanders to embrace the outdoors. Whether in orchards, parks, or backyards, let us celebrate the Persimmon and rediscover the beauty of open spaces.

In Conclusion: I urge you to support Senate Bill 74 with unwavering enthusiasm. Let the Persimmon symbolize our commitment to nature, health, and unity. Together, we can cultivate a stronger, more vibrant Maryland—one where the Persimmon thrives alongside our shared dreams.

Wholeheartedly,

Andrzej Marciniak

8440 Commerce St. #107, Port Tobacco, MD 20677

a.m@unghee.com

+1 202 321-1844

Signed SB 74 Testimony - Ellis.pdf

Uploaded by: Arthur Ellis

Position: FAV

Bruce Woodham Maryland SB74 2024 support letter.pdf

Uploaded by: Bruce Woodham, Jr.

Position: FAV

Maryland Senate. Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee.

2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

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Best regards,

Bruce Woodham

6213 Hard Bargain Circle, MD 20640

brucewoodham@gmail.com

(301) 751-4590

Maryland SB74 2024 support letter_CW.pdf

Uploaded by: Chai Woodham

Position: FAV

Maryland Senate. Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee.

2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

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In Conclusion: I urge you to support Senate Bill 74 with unwavering enthusiasm. Let the Persimmon symbolize our commitment to nature, health, and unity. Together, we can cultivate a stronger, more vibrant Maryland—one where the Persimmon thrives alongside our shared dreams.

Wholeheartedly,

Chai Woodham

4033 2nd Street, North Beach, MD 20714

cnwoodham@hotmail.com

301-325-1512

Senate Bill 74 Letter of Support (State Fruit).pdf

Uploaded by: Johntel Greene

Position: FAV



Prince George's County Municipal Association
An Association of 27 Municipalities



March 6, 2024

The Honorable Brian Feldman, Chairman
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support for SB0074

We are writing to wholeheartedly express our enthusiastic support for SB0074, which designates the Persimmon as the official state fruit of Maryland. As a native Maryland varietal, the Persimmon has played an integral role in our state's history, culture, and well-being.

The Persimmon has been intertwined with Maryland's story since time immemorial. From the Indigenous Peoples who first inhabited this land, to settlers, enslaved individuals, and the diverse array of international immigrants who now call Maryland home, the Persimmon has nourished and sustained generations. Its presence is a testament to our shared agricultural heritage.

Additionally, these native varietals foster environmental stewardship by encouraging reforestation efforts and provide a source of food in underserved communities where fresh produce is scarce. Planting Persimmon trees in community spaces, we empower residents to access wholesome food and improve their well-being.

The Persimmon's hues, ranging from deep orange to scarlet, perfectly complement Maryland's existing state symbols. Just as our flag, bird, steamed crab, butterfly, and Old Bay spice evoke pride, the Persimmon's colors resonate with our collective identity.

I urge you to support Senate Bill 74 with unwavering enthusiasm. Let the Persimmon symbolize our commitment to nature, health, and unity. Together, we can cultivate a stronger, more vibrant Maryland—one where the Persimmon thrives alongside our shared dreams.

Sincerely,

Melinda Mendoza

Melinda Mendoza

PGCMA President

MMendoza@ColmarManor.org

jensen.pdf

Uploaded by: Kelsey Jensen

Position: FAV

Maryland Senate. Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee.
Miller Senate Office Building
2 West Wing
11 Bladen St.
Annapolis, MD 21401

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In Conclusion: I urge you to support Senate Bill 74 with unwavering enthusiasm. Let the Persimmon symbolize our commitment to nature, health, and unity. Together, we can cultivate a stronger, more vibrant Maryland—one where the Persimmon thrives alongside our shared dreams.

Respectfully,



Kelsey Jensen

Dolly Circle

Berlin, MD 21811

kacook0@gmail.com

443-624-2362

Maryland SB74 2024 support letter .pdf

Uploaded by: Lucille Walker

Position: FAV

Maryland Senate. Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee.

2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

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I urge a favorable report on SB 74.

Sincerely,

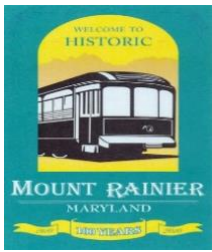
Lucille W. Walker

Lucille W. Walker
Executive Director
Southern Maryland National Heritage Area
walker@tccsmd.org
301-343-2771
P.O. Box 745 – Hughesville, MD - 20637

Support for Maryland Senate Bill 74 (2024) Designa

Uploaded by: Mayor Celina Benitez

Position: FAV



Office of The Mayor Celina R. Benitez

1 Municipal Place, Mount Rainier, Maryland 20712 Telephone: (301) 985-6585 MountRainierMD.org

Maryland Senate. Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee.
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Subject: Support for Maryland Senate Bill 74 (2024) Designating Persimmon as the Official State Fruit

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Distinguished Members of the Senate's Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

On Behalf of the City of Mount Rainier Mayor and Council, I am writing to wholeheartedly express my enthusiastic support for Maryland Senate Bill 74 (2024), which designates the **Persimmon** as the official state fruit of Maryland. As a native Maryland varietal, the Persimmon has played an integral role in our state's history, culture, and well-being.

The Persimmon has rich Heritage imbedded, it has been intertwined with Maryland's story. From the Native Peoples who first inhabited this land to settlers, Enslaved individuals, and the diverse array of international immigrants who now call Maryland home, the Persimmon has nourished and sustained generations. Its presence is a testament to our shared agricultural heritage.

Maryland faces several food deserts, where fresh, nutritious options are scarce. The Persimmon, with its rich nutritional content and native to Maryland, can be a valuable resource. By planting Persimmon trees in community spaces, we empower residents to access wholesome food and improve their well-being.

The City of Mount Rainier is leading in the efforts in creating a Native Plant network with several cities across the State to not just bring culture to our state but create beautiful green public space, as well incentivizing residents to utilized their front lawns with Native planting. The Persimmon as an example can contributes to reforestation efforts as its canopy coverage benefits our ecosystem, providing shade, habitat, and beauty.

I urge you to support Senate Bill 74 with unwavering enthusiasm. Let the Persimmon symbolize our commitment to nature, health, and unity. Together, we can cultivate a stronger, more vibrant Maryland—one where the Persimmon thrives alongside our shared dreams.

Please feel free to contact me at 301-985-6585 or via email MayorBenitez@MountRainierMD.org if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Celina R. Benitez

Mayor Celina Benitez, City of Mount Rainier

2024-03 SB0074 (Persimmon) Support Letter.pdf

Uploaded by: Michael O'Connor

Position: FAV



FREDERICK

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

March 6, 2024

Chair Brian Feldman
Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Subject: Support for Maryland Senate Bill 0074 (2024) Designating Persimmon as the Official State Fruit

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Distinguished Members of the Senate's Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

I am writing to express my support for Maryland SB0074 (2024), which designates the Persimmon as the official state fruit of Maryland. As a native Maryland varietal, the Persimmon has played an integral role in our state's history, culture, and well-being.

From the Native Peoples who first inhabited this land to settlers, Enslaved individuals, and the diverse array of international immigrants who now call Maryland home, the Persimmon has nourished and sustained generations. Its presence is a testament to our shared and rich agricultural heritage.

With its sweet, complex flavor, Persimmons grace our tables in puddings, beverages, and baked goods. Across ethnic cuisines, from Asian to European, the Persimmon adds a delightful touch to dishes. Its versatility bridges cultures, connects us through food, and builds on Maryland's contributions to American cuisine.

Through this designation³. Building Food Connections: In our heavily agricultural state, many children have lost touch with the origins of their food. , the Persimmon provides an opportunity to reconnect us to the origins of our food especially our children. Imagine children gathering under Persimmon trees learning about seasons, flavors, and the joy of harvesting. Communal fruit picking fosters a sense of belonging, encourages physical activity, and promotes overall health.

It can also assist in addressing Maryland food deserts, where fresh, nutritious options are scarce. The Persimmon, with its rich nutritional content, can be a valuable resource. By planting Persimmon trees in community spaces, we empower residents to access wholesome food and improve their well-being. And as a native varietal, the Persimmon can contribute to environmental stewardship and reforestation efforts benefiting our ecosystem, and providing shade, habitat, and beauty.

The Persimmon's hues—ranging from deep orange to scarlet—perfectly complement Maryland's existing state symbols. Just as our flag, bird, steamed crab, butterfly, and Old Bay spice evoke pride, the Persimmon's colors resonate with our collective identity, and will

encourage Marylanders to embrace the outdoors. Whether in orchards, parks, or backyards, let us celebrate the Persimmon and rediscover the beauty of open spaces.

In Conclusion, I urge a favorable report. Let the Persimmon symbolize our commitment to nature, health, and unity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. O'Connor", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Michael O'Connor
Mayor, The City of Frederick

SB74 Mayor Mahoney Testimony of Support.pdf

Uploaded by: Patrick Mahoney

Position: FAV

Good Morning Honorable Senators,

SB74 - Favorable

I am Chesapeake Beach Mayor Pat Mahoney testifying on behalf of the residents and Town Council of Chesapeake Beach, Maryland to express our support for Senate Bill 74 recognizing persimmon as the State fruit of Maryland

Native to Maryland, persimmons can be found just about everywhere in the state, with the exception of Garrett County due to the mountainous nature of the region.

Like Marylanders, the trees are known for their resilience, being able to thrive for years.

Persimmons are integral to many seasonal recipes and drinks. Persimmons have especially been used for fine wines, jams and baked goods. Indigenous people of the region used the fruit not only for food but medicinally as well. Sore throats and indigestion were common ailments that the use of persimmons attempted to treat.

The usefulness of the persimmon tree doesn't end with the fruit. The wood of the tree is extremely strong, and is commonly used within shoes, golf clubs, flooring and musical instruments.

For these reasons we support SB74 and encourage you to support it as well.

Sincerely,

Patrick J. Mahoney

Mayor, Chesapeake Beach

SB 74 - Letter of Support.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Rachel Jones

Position: FAV



Maryland Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary

Wes Moore, Governor

Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor

Kevin M. Atticks, Secretary

Steven A. Connelly, Deputy Secretary

Agriculture | Maryland's Leading
Industry

The Wayne A. Cawley, Jr. Building

50 Harry S Truman Parkway

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

mda.maryland.gov

410.841.5885 Baltimore/Washington

410.841.5846 Fax

Maryland Department of Agriculture

Legislative Comment

Date: March 8, 2024

BILL NUMBER: SB 74

SHORT TITLE: State Designations - State Fruit - Persimmon

MDA POSITION: SUPPORT

The Maryland Department of Agriculture supports SB 74, which establishes the Persimmon as Maryland's State Fruit. The American Persimmon or American date plum's name is derived from the Powhatan word "putchamin". Persimmons are the fruits of a group of trees that belong to the ebony family (scientifically called the *Diospyros virginiana*). This species of persimmon is native to Maryland and much of the East Coast in the United States.

The wild American persimmon was well-known by native Americans, who used its hardwood, consumed the fruits, and introduced them to the European colonists. The fruits were dried like prunes for storage. In addition to its unique sweet but tangy flavor, the persimmon has many traditional medicinal uses ranging from treating sore throats and mouths, to indigestion, thrush, and heartburn. A bark infusion of persimmon, alder, white walnut, and wild cherry was used for toothache. The persimmon fruit, which usually ripens in fall, is often used in jams and baked goods. The fruit pulp can be turned into molasses, and the seeds can be turned into a peanut-like oil or roasted and used as a coffee substitute. Dried leaves make a great tea high in vitamin C.

While the majority of the market on persimmons is dominated by the Asian Persimmon in both imports and exports, there is a domestic market for the American Persimmon. The marketing season for fresh persimmons are the fall months of September through December. With a state designation, Maryland could see an increase in demand for American Persimmons. Direct sales through farm stands and farmers markets, community supported agriculture (CSAs), U-pick operations, and other means are potential benefits of the designation and could boost local economies. MDA requests a favorable report on SB 74.

If you have additional questions, please contact Rachel Jones, Director of Government Relations, at Rachel.Jones2@maryland.gov or (410) 841-5886.

Seth Shames Maryland SB74 2024 support letter.pdf

Uploaded by: Seth Shames

Position: FAV

Maryland Senate. Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee.

2 West
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Subject: Support for Maryland Senate Bill 74 (2024) Designating Persimmon as the Official State Fruit

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In Conclusion: I urge you to support Senate Bill 74 with unwavering enthusiasm. Let the Persimmon symbolize our commitment to nature, health, and unity. Together, we can cultivate a stronger, more vibrant Maryland—one where the Persimmon thrives alongside our shared dreams.

Wholeheartedly,

Seth Shames, Preston's Orchard

7300 Maple Ave, Takoma Park, MD, 20912

917-940-4353

sethshames@gmail.com

Seth Shames SB74 testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Seth Shames

Position: FAV

Good morning. Thank you to the members of the committee for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Seth Shames, and along with my wife, Sophie Kasimow, I own and manage Preston's Orchard, a two-acre persimmon orchard in Owings, in Calvert County.

Our persimmons have been sold at many Maryland farmers markets, grocery stores, and have been processed to make Kombucha, cider and brandy. They look a little bit like an orange tomato or a miniature pumpkin and they are sweet and crunchy when ripe. They are a gorgeous, delicious, and very healthy fruit.

Our persimmon trees were planted about 30 years ago by a horticulturalist at the University of Maryland named Bill Preston. We met Bill at our local farmers market in Takoma Park, and one thing led to another and a few years later we were running the orchard!

From a commercial perspective our persimmons have the benefit of being non-astringent, which means you can eat them when they are still hard, although they get sweeter as they soften. The native variety of persimmon, often called the 'American Persimmon', is typically quite small and astringent, about the size of a golfball, and need to be soft before they can be enjoyed. The American persimmon plays a very important role in Maryland's history, ecology and culture and our trees are grafted onto American persimmon rootstock to help them survive the Maryland winters.

Bill was one of a small group of people who should be credited for bringing Asian varieties of persimmons to this region of the United States. He lived his whole life in Maryland and became one of the nation's leading persimmon experts. He published a book called 'When Persimmon Was King' that describes the persimmon trees, fruit and production practices that his mentors encountered on their collecting trips to Asia. Bill managed a test plot in Maryland where he tested the taste, texture, size, and hardiness of dozens of different varieties to see which variety would fare best in Southern Maryland. He selected the very top performing variety and planted over 70 trees on 2 acres on what was then his family's 50 acre tobacco farm.

The result was a very unique, successful, and beautiful orchard that has brought deliciousness and joy to thousands of Marylanders over the years. I can attest that the fruit has devoted fans throughout the state. We have people who drive 2 hours to our house to buy a box every fall. We get requests from all over the country, particularly the mid-Atlantic region, for scionwood that would allow other farmers to graft this variety and begin growing persimmons of their own. There's far more interest than we can meet.

Bill was a kind of "Johnny Persimmon Seed," and one of the goals of his work was to spread the word that persimmons can be a successful crop in Maryland. Sadly, Bill died in 2019 about a year after we took over the orchard.

I know that he would be absolutely thrilled to have persimmon recognized as the state fruit of Maryland. This would be a beautiful way to honor Bill, and his research colleagues, while signaling an optimistic vision of a very bright future for persimmons in Maryland.

Thank you for the time, and I would love to invite you all out to pick persimmons this Fall!

MD SB74 - MNPS 03.08.2024 FINAL.pdf

Uploaded by: Diane Beedle

Position: FWA



Maryland Native Plant Society

P.O. Box 4877, Silver Spring, MD 20914 • www.mdflora.org

Appreciation • Education • Conservation

Testimony: SB74, State Designations – State Fruit – Persimmon
Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment
Hearing Date: March 8, 2024
Position: FWA

The Maryland Native Plant Society (MNPS) urges a favorable report with amendment for Senate Bill 74, State Designations – State Fruit – Persimmon. We respectfully request that the bill be amended to read as follows on page 2 line 1:

AMERICAN persimmon (**DIOSPYROS VIRGINIANA**) is the State fruit.

This change clarifies that the bill refers to the persimmon that is native to the state of Maryland. With this amendment, MNPS fully supports SB74.

MNPS's mission is to promote awareness, appreciation, and conservation of Maryland's native plants and their habitats. We pursue our mission through education, research, advocacy, and service activities.

Native plants are the cornerstone of our ecosystems, having naturally grown and evolved in specific locations and conditions. For our state symbols, we believe it is important to promote species that have an important role in the ecological health of the State. The American persimmon is a host plant for our beautiful luna moth, and the fruit is eaten by songbirds and other native wildlife. Furthermore, the American persimmon has a long history in Maryland. Indigenous peoples ate the fruit, and both fruit and bark were used in traditional medicine.

Without adding the scientific name, *Diospyros virginiana*, the bill as it stands could pertain to any species of persimmon, regardless of its connection to and importance to the State. We believe SB74 will be strengthened with this addition and help further the understanding of the history and importance of the American persimmon to Maryland.

Thank you for your consideration of this amendment. Please feel free to contact me for more information or with any questions.

Sincerely,

Lauren Hubbard
President
Maryland Native Plant Society

Oppose SB 74— State Designation—State Fruit—Persim

Uploaded by: Maureen Fine

Position: UNF

Sponsored by Sen. Ellis

Committee—Education, Energy, and Environment

Dear Sen. Feldman (Chair), Sen. Kagan (Vice Chair), and Committee Members,

I oppose this bill unless it is amended to specify the American persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*) as the Maryland state fruit. From this article in the Baltimore Banner, it appears that this bill aims to promote an Asian persimmon

<https://www.thebaltimorebanner.com/politics-power/state-government/the-persimmon-may-become-marylands-state-fruit-P3PA3KVBKVF7FA5U6HC66EQHY4/>

Native plants are the foundation of the healthy ecosystems that support native wildlife and a thriving economy, as well as having their own intrinsic value.

(https://dnr.maryland.gov/wildlife/Pages/plants_wildlife/Native-Plants.aspx#:~:text=Native%20plants%20are%20the%20foundation,having%20their%20own%20intrinsic%20value.)

Our state bird is the Baltimore oriole, our state insect the Baltimore checkerspot, and the black-eyed Susan is our state flower. The idea that we would have a state fruit that is not native to our state seems inappropriate. All of the above "official" state designations are of species that support biodiversity, that are mutually sustaining, that have evolved together over the ages. Our MD native **American persimmon** (*Diospyros virginiana*) is a host plant for more than 45 butterfly and moth species, and attracts many species of native bees. The Asian persimmon, on the other hand, provides none of those services because it did not evolve with the insects native to our state. The fruit from the American persimmon should be our MD state fruit, not the non-native Asian persimmon

Thank you,
Maureen Fine
2509 Knighthill Lane
Bowie, MD 20715