



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

House Bill 56

Procurement - State Department of Education - Control Authority - Local Food Purchasing

Date: March 26, 2025

To: Budget & Taxation Committee

Position: **FAVORABLE**

From: Matt Stegman,
Maryland Staff Attorney

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** House Bill 56 which will permit the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), in coordination with the Department of Agriculture and Department of General Services to, pending the availability of funding, create a program to procure locally-produced food for local school systems. This program, when implemented, will benefit school-age children who will have increased access to fresh, local food, and support Maryland's agricultural and fishery industries.

Many small farming operations are at the forefront of implementing regenerative agricultural practices that improve soil health and increase food and water quality. Regenerative agriculture is also key to addressing many issues we face regarding climate change, from reducing greenhouse gases to mitigating flooding caused by more intense storms. Climate-friendly practices, like those practiced at CBF's Clagett Farm, help us produce food in ways that increase resilience and work with natural systems. Providing smaller operations access to more stable financial opportunities is not just a win for those businesses, schools, and students, but potentially for our soil and waterways as well.

Finally, the bill specifically allows for the procurement of Certified Chesapeake Invasive Species. This will aid in the State's efforts to combat invasive – and delicious – species like the blue catfish by providing an increased market demand for the fish. Reducing blue catfish populations will support the health of key aquatic species they prey on, most notably menhaden and blue crabs.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on HB 56.

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at mstegman@cbf.org.

Maryland Office • Philip Merrill Environmental Center • 6 Herndon Avenue • Annapolis • Maryland • 21403

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 200,000 members and e-subscribers, including 71,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.