



Fair Farms[®] Maryland

a campaign for healthy food, land & waterways

Support for Senate Bill 985 (Senator Hester)
Certified Local Farm Enterprise Program and Certified Local Farm Enterprise Food
Aggregation Grant Fund - Establishment
Position: Support with Sponsor Amendments

February 25, 2020

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Members of the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee:

I am writing in support of Senate Bill 985 with sponsor amendments, sponsored by Senator Hester, which establishes the Certified Local Farm Enterprise Program and Certified Local Farm Enterprise Food Aggregation Fund.

The Fair Farms campaign of Waterkeepers Chesapeake brings together consumers, farmers, public health professionals, and conservationists to advocate for a food system that is equitable, fair to farmers, invests in homegrown healthy foods, and restores our waterways. We are a growing movement of over 35,000 Marylanders and close to 200 partners across the state. These partners include national organizations like Farm Aid, the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, Family Farm Defenders, and National Family Farm Coalition and local groups like the Maryland Organic Food and Farming Association, Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food and Agriculture, and Chesapeake Physicians for Social Responsibility.

Because of your leadership, last year Maryland created the Maryland Food for Maryland Institutions Study Group whose goal has been to increase the amount of locally grown food procured by Maryland institutions, providing more market opportunities for our local farming community. Out of that diverse network of stakeholders, came the idea to establish the two important programs outlined in SB 985. The first voluntary program would allow state institutions to contact local farms that meet certain environmental standards. This will help build relationships between farms and institutions in an effort to better support our local farming community. The bill also supports the creation of mobile, refrigerated trailers, and value-added

food processing facilities in order to make it easier for smaller, local farms to get their produce to institutions in Maryland.

Local food procurement by state institutions will allow its clients, staff, and other consumers have improved access to healthier institutional meals that utilize fresh, nutrient-rich, local produce. Procuring food grown by the Maryland farming community would also reduce the amount of energy it takes to transport food from other parts of the world, and generate more money within Maryland's local economy.

These programs will not only provide more revenue for Maryland farmers, but they will also ensure the strength of local farm economies, provide local farmers with the tools needed to serve larger markets, preserve farmland, improve access to healthy, nutritious food, and build the resilience of our local economy.

Ultimately, this bill will lift up local farmers and help increase the amount of locally grown food that folks are able to access at state institutions – which is why we are standing strongly behind this bill for the 2020 session. For these reasons, we urge the Committee to adopt a favorable report of SB 985 with sponsor amendments.

For Fair Farms,

Shelby Kalm
Campaign Manager