



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

House Bill 1534

Department of Agriculture- Urban Agriculture Grant Program

DATE: MARCH 6, 2020

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) SUPPORTS HB 1534. 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.

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.

The modern food system, whereby produce is commonly shipped across the country or internationally before arriving in grocery stores, creates food waste and produces tons of harmful greenhouse gas emissions. Purchasing local food reduces these emissions and benefits the environment, human health, Maryland farmers, and the local economy.

HB 1534's Urban Agriculture Grant program would boost the locally grown food economy in Baltimore City. It is hoped that the Grant's support will create an avenue for local farmers and gardeners to provide access for metropolitan Baltimore residents to local, healthy food. In turn, the investments of residents in local food providers will bolster community resilience and may help sustain green spaces in the City.

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. 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.

For these reasons, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation recommends a FAVORABLE report on HB 1534 from the Environment and Transportation Committee. For more information please contact Carmera Thomas, Baltimore Program Manager, at 443.482.2011 or carmerathomas@cbf.org.

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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 300,000 members and e-subscribers, including over 107,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.