



March 10, 2020

To: House Health and Government Operations Committee

From: MidAtlantic Farm Credit

**Bill: HB 1488 – Certified Local Farm Enterprise Program and Certified Local Farm Enterprise Food Aggregation Grant Fund - Establishment**

Position: **SUPPORT**

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MidAtlantic Farm Credit is a member-owned cooperative supporting rural communities and agriculture with reliable, consistent credit and financial services in good times and bad. Headquartered in Westminster, MD, we are one of the largest agricultural lenders on the East Coast with almost \$2.9 billion dollars in loans outstanding to over 11,500 member-owners representing the full range of agriculture throughout our five-state territory.

This bill would establish the Certified Local Farm Enterprise Program and office within the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) to encourage State agencies and public universities to achieve an overall goal of purchasing at least 20% of food from such certified local farms. It would also establish the Certified Local Farm Enterprise Food Aggregation Grant Fund within MARBIDCO to help establish and operate food aggregation, storage, processing, and distribution sites across Maryland.

Encouraging the procurement of certified, locally-produced food benefits Maryland's agricultural producers, consumer health, the environment, and helps keep taxpayer dollars right here in Maryland. The bill's sponsors worked extensively with stakeholders throughout the interim to develop the framework for the program to ensure its ease of use for participating farms as well as procurement offices across agencies and institutions. We are optimistic about the opportunities it presents for existing farms wishing to diversify or expand, as well as the prospects for new farms to take advantage of the heightened focus on locally-produced food.

Another piece of the puzzle, but no less important to the effort, is the grant program the bill establishes. This tool will be critical in helping develop the infrastructure necessary to help smaller, diversified farms engage in the State and institutional procurement process.

**MidAtlantic Farm Credit SUPPORTS HB 1488.**

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kurt Fuchs".

KURT H. FUCHS  
SVP, Government Affairs

*For more information, please contact Kurt Fuchs at 443-786-0855 or [kfuchs@mafc.com](mailto:kfuchs@mafc.com).*