



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

*Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education*

House Bill 1488

**Certified Local Farm Enterprise Program and Certified Local Farm Enterprise Food
Aggregation Grant Fund - Establishment**

DATE: MARCH 10, 2020

CBF POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) SUPPORTS HB 1488. This bill would support Maryland farmers and the environment by establishing an office and program within the Department of Agriculture to encourage certain State units to achieve 20% of the total dollar value of procurement contracts from local farms.

Healthy farms and regenerative food production systems are a requisite for a healthy ecosystem. The modern food system, whereby produce is commonly shipped across the country or internationally before arriving in grocery stores, creates food waste and has a huge impact on our changing climate. **Purchasing local food reduces these emissions and benefits the environment, human health, Maryland farmers, and the local economy.**

The agriculture sector is the largest source of non-point pollution entering the Chesapeake Bay. Supporting locally grown food from sustainable farms is integral to CBF's mission to save the 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.

When you buy local food, you are keeping local farmers farming, protecting their land with sustainable or regenerative agricultural practices. These practices keep costs down and soils productive and result in less pollution flowing into local streams and the Bay. This clearer water allows for sunlight to reach the Bay bottom, nourishing underwater grasses which provide critical habitat for young crabs and other bay species – another valuable source of local food harvested in the State.

HB 1488 recognizes the importance of a Certified Local Farm Enterprise Program and requires the University System of Maryland to purchase 20 % of the total dollar value of procurement contracts from local farms. For every dollar spent in a conventional food market, 91 cents are attributable to processing, packaging, and shipping costs while the farmer only receives 9 cents on the dollar. **Local farmers who sell directly keep 80 to 90 cents of each dollar. Local farmers are more likely to reinvest their income in their local economies.**

By establishing an aggregation grant fund, creating new positions within the Department of Agriculture, and providing a fraud hotline to protect local farmers and consumers, HB 1488 is investing in the health of Maryland farms, Maryland citizens, the Maryland economy, and the Chesapeake Bay. **For these reasons, CBF SUPPORTS HB 1488 and urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report.** For more information, please contact Rob Schnabel, Land Restoration Scientist, at RSchnabel@cbf.org or 443.482.2175.

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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.