



Fair Farms[®] Maryland

a campaign for healthy food, land & waterways

Senate Bill 539 (Senator Guzzone)
Income Tax Credit – Food Donation Pilot Program – Extension

Position: Support

February 3, 2021

Dear Members of the Budget and Taxation Committee:

I am writing on behalf of Fair Farms in support of Senate Bill 539, sponsored by Senator Guzzone, which extends the Food Donation Pilot Program that was signed into law by Governor Hogan in 2017. The 2017 program was a pilot program that applied to Southern Maryland and Montgomery County. It was expanded statewide in 2019. In 2019 alone, 127,795 pounds of donations were reported. If the program continues, it could continue to give low-income Marylanders greater access to locally-grown, fresh, nutrient-dense food, while supporting our local farming communities during this challenging time.

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.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic we have seen an increase in food insecurity. From March through June of this year, 4 in 10 people visiting food banks were there for the first time.¹ Given this increase in demand for food assistance during a time when public health is our top priority, it's critical that we provide those frequenting food banks and pantries with nutrient-dense food that supports a healthy immune system. At the same time, farmers have had a challenging year. The continuation of a credit like this would be a way of financially valuing our local farming community and acknowledging the essential role they play in keeping our communities fed.

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https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/Brief_Impact%20of%20Covid%20on%20Food%20Insecurity%204.22%20%28002%29.pdf

This bill is a win-win-win (a win for local farmers, a win for reducing hunger in our communities, and a win for public health). For these reasons, we stand strongly behind this bill and urge the Committee to adopt a favorable report of Senate Bill 539.

Sincerely,

Shelby Kalm
Fair Farms Campaign Manager
Waterkeepers Chesapeake

Additional Supporters:

Anna Chaney, *Honey's Harvest Farm*
Dena Leibman, *Future Harvest*
Ellen Polishuk, *Plant to Profit*
Emily Ranson, *Clean Water Action*
Gabriel Bustos, *Elemental Education*
JoAnn Coates-Hunter, *Fox Haven Organic Farm & Learning Center*
Kathy Phillips, *Assateague Coastal Trust*
Kate Medina, *Charles Koiner Conservancy for Urban Farming*
Kimberly Eisenreich, *Maryland Local Management Board Association*
Maria Payan, *Sentinels of Eastern Shore Health*
Meghan Ochal, *Dicot Farm*
Melanie Smith-Bell, *Community FARE*
Ruth Berlin, *Maryland Pesticide Education Network*
Samuel White, *Leaning Pine Farm*
Steven Mandel, *The Critical Issues Forum*