



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education

Senate Bill 365

Neighborhood Business Development Program - Food Desert Projects - Business Retention

Date: February 9, 2021

To: Senate Education, Health, and
Environmental Affairs Committee

Position: Support

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Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** SB 365 which supports businesses providing access to healthy food in urban and rural food deserts. Local distribution of healthy foods can help reverse inequities in food distribution and reduce food waste that pollutes the Chesapeake Bay.

Ensuring local sources of healthy foods supports the health of Maryland residents

This legislation would include food desert projects as eligible for financial assistance from the neighborhood business development program alongside other microenterprise projects. It would increase the maximum amount of loans from the fund to \$100,000, and allow for their forgiveness after five years if the recipient maintains a business providing access to healthy food in an urban or rural food desert.

Supporting businesses providing healthy foods to residents currently living in “food deserts” supports the health of those residents. Healthy foods might include produce, meats, and grains that serve as the raw ingredients for low-cost and nutrient-rich home-cooked meals. Increasing access to healthy foods will help build stability for residents.

This legislation may help build a network of local food production, including community-centered urban agriculture

This legislation may also help local food producers, such as community-centered urban agriculture to maintain their green print in urban and rural areas. Urban agriculture food hubs can re-purposes vacant lots in developed areas and bring increased vitality to neighborhood life.¹

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 local distribution of healthy foods is imperative to feeding growing populations, reducing food waste and increasing food system values.

CBF urges the Committee’s FAVORABLE report on SB 365

¹ Institute of Medicine and National Research Council. 2009. [The Public Health Effects of Food Deserts: Workshop Summary](#) Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

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