



# CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

---

*Environmental Protection and Restoration  
Environmental Education*

## **Senate Bill 673**

Department of Agriculture - Urban Agriculture Grant Program

Date: February 24, 2021  
To: Senate Education, Health  
and Environmental Affairs Committee

Position: **Support**  
From: Carmera Thomas-Wilhite,  
Baltimore Program Manager

---

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS SB 673**. 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.

### **Urban agriculture may reduce pollution into the Chesapeake Bay**

Urban agriculture has the potential to reduce pollution into the Chesapeake Bay through expanding a green footprint within developed areas, and reducing stormwater runoff through natural filters, and capturing carbon through plant life and healthy soils.

### **This legislation complements existing Baltimore City initiatives**

Baltimore City has an existing initiative to increase production, distribution, and consumption of urban-grown foods in the City. SB 673 requires grant recipients to distribute funding to urban agricultural producers to maintain safe, environmentally sustainable, and socially responsible practices. This legislation would further the City's commitment to providing equitable access to healthy food, support locally owned businesses, promote environmental sustainability, and increase the City's green spaces.

### **Access to healthy food is an environmental justice aim and aligns with federal agricultural funding policies**

This bill increases equity and access for low income and communities of color, especially for those communities with a lack of access to healthy, fresh, local food sources. Federal agricultural funding programs provide funding for urban farming practices. A next step beyond this legislation could be to incorporate eligibility for practices like hoop houses and water systems for irrigation in all relevant Maryland Department of Agriculture grant programs.

### **Local sustainable agriculture is part of CBF's mission**

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.

**CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on SB 673.** For more information, please contact Robin Jessica Clark, Maryland Staff Attorney at [rclark@cbf.org](mailto:rclark@cbf.org) and 443.995.8753.

Maryland Office • Philip Merrill Environmental Center • 6 Herndon Avenue • Annapolis • Maryland • 21403  
Phone (410) 268-8816 • Fax (410) 280-3513