



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education

Senate Bill 121

Maryland Farms and Families Fund, Maryland Food and Agricultural Resiliency Mechanism Grant Program, and Maryland Farm-to-School Meal Grant Pilot Program – Alterations and Establishment

Date: January 25, 2022

Position: Support

To: Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs

From: Alan Girard, Eastern Shore Director

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** SB 121 which would enhance access to food sold at local farm markets and farm stands, build food system resiliency by leveraging Maryland agricultural products and services to support the State’s food banks and charitable emergency food providers, and incentivize through a pilot program the production, procurement, and provision of local foods in school meals by offsetting the expense of food purchase and handling investments made by eligible school districts.

The COVID pandemic has brought into stark relief the shortcomings of our national food supply system. The Consumer Brands Association reports that there are “not enough trucks and drivers to move goods, skyrocketing costs for companies and consumers, and emerging input and product availability concerns – all underpinned by a labor shortage that is only growing worse.”¹ The group says that while U.S. grocers typically have 5% to 10% of their items out of stock at any given time, the unavailability rate currently is hovering around 15%.²

The measures in this bill can increase the resiliency of our food system, which the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future defines as one that is, “able to withstand and recover from disruptions in a way that ensures a sufficient supply of acceptable and accessible food for all.”³ CBF’s [Buy Fresh Buy Local](#) program connects Maryland residents with opportunities to buy locally grown, sustainably produced food, encouraging money spent on food to be cycled through the local economy, reducing greenhouse gasses that result from transporting food long-distances, and increasing the benefits of freshly harvested farm products to public health.

The bill also can increase food access to Maryland’s most vulnerable populations, which CBF’s Clagett Farm has been doing through *From the Ground Up*, a program that for more than 40 years

¹ [Supply Chain Dashboard](#), Consumer Brands Association, last visited 1.14.2022.

² *Id.*

³ [Food System Resilience](#), Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, last visited 1.14.2022.

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has provided fresh produce to people living in poverty and near-poverty in the Washington, D.C. area.⁴ The proposed grant program can increase access to fresh food among those who need it most.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on SB 121. For more information, please contact Robin Jessica Clark, Maryland Staff Attorney at rclark@cbf.org and 443.995.8753.

⁴ [Social Justice Grows on Clagett Farm](#), Chesapeake Bay Foundation, last visited 1.14.2022.