



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education

House Bill 855

Agriculture - Urban Agriculture Water and Power Infrastructure Grant Program and Fund – Establishment

Date: February 25, 2022

Position: Support

To: Environment & Transportation Committee

From: Robin Clark, Maryland Staff Attorney

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** HB 855, which establishes the Urban Agriculture Water and Power Infrastructure Grant Program in the Department of Agriculture to increase the viability of urban farming and community gardens and improve access to urban-grown foods; through grants to urban agricultural producers and qualified nonprofit organizations for the purchase and installation of agricultural equipment associated with water supply and irrigation and electric power access.

HB 855 recognizes the potential of urban agriculture and the needs of the movement at this moment.

Small, urban and suburban farms can strengthen communities, create business opportunities, and address gaps in access to healthy foods throughout Maryland, while reducing greenhouse gas emissions associated with food transport, and creating green spaces that can filter polluted air and water. In speaking with urban farmers and urban farm service providers, one challenge in start-up is the economic hurdle of establishing water irrigation and metering at a potential farm site. This bill seeks to address that hurdle through grants to farmers and farm service providers.

Urban agriculture may improve equity and access to healthy food.

This bill may increase 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. 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. CBF's Clagett Farm supports access to food for vulnerable populations in Maryland through *From the Ground Up*, a program that for more than 40 years has provided fresh produce to people living in poverty and near-poverty in the Washington, D.C. area.¹ The proposed grant program can increase access to fresh food among those who need it most.

Local, regenerative food production may reduce pollution into the Chesapeake Bay.

The agriculture sector accounts for nearly one third of global greenhouse gas emissions and is the largest source of non-point pollution entering the Chesapeake Bay. This legislation is a complement to other stateside and local efforts to support a growing trend of small, regenerative, urban and suburban farms that provide fresh fruit and produce to Marylanders. The use of property within City centers, town and suburban developments for sustainable agriculture may help improve local water quality and reduce runoff into the

¹ [Social Justice Grows on Clagett Farm](#), Chesapeake Bay Foundation, last visited 1.14.2022.

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Chesapeake Bay. If successful, the continued investments of residents in local food providers may help grow a greenprint of sustainable agriculture plots throughout Maryland's developed areas.

CBF urges the Committee's FAVORABLE report on HB 855. For more information, please contact Robin Jessica Clark, Maryland Staff Attorney at rclark@cbf.org and 443.995.8753.