



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

Environmental Protection and Restoration
Environmental Education

House Bill 1216

Department of Agriculture - Urban Agriculture Grant Fund

Date: March 4, 2022

To: Environment and Transportation

Position: **Support**

From: Robin Clark, Maryland Staff Attorney

Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** HB 1216. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** **HB 1216**. 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 seeks to support the growth of urban agriculture statewide

Many areas in Maryland are experiencing an increase in interest in urban agriculture. HB 1216 will seek to support those start-up producers with additional training, education, and funding. This legislation would further the State's commitment to providing equitable access to healthy food, supporting locally owned businesses, and increasing green spaces in developed areas. Expanding the eligibility of the grant program to urban farmers who do not also provide outreach to elementary students could further the reach of grant, especially to those beginning farming as part of a re-entry program.

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, in particular 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 HB 1216. For more information, please contact Robin Jessica Clark, Maryland Staff Attorney at rclark@cbf.org and 443.995.8753.

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