



February 13, 2023

2023 SESSION SUPPORT TESTIMONY
HBoo63: Certified Local Farm and Chesapeake Invasive Species
Provider Program - Establishment

BILL: HBoo63: Certified Local Farm and Chesapeake Invasive Species Provider Program - Establishment

COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations

POSITION: Testimony in Support of House Bill 0063

BILL ANALYSIS: Altering the Certified Local Farm Enterprise Program to be the Certified Local Farm and Chesapeake Invasive Species Provider Program; expanding the purpose of the Program to include food from certified Chesapeake invasive species providers in the overall percentage goal for certain procurement contracts; and altering the Certified Local Farm Enterprise Food Aggregation Grant Fund to be the Certified Local Farm and Chesapeake Invasive Species Provider Food Aggregation Grant Fund.

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk and members of the Health and Government Operations Committee:

The Montgomery County Food Council (MCFC) urges you to **SUPPORT** this bill to count the procurement of blue catfish by Chesapeake Bay watermen toward the statutory goal of purchasing at least 20% of food from certified local farms. In 2021, the Certified Local Farm Program was established within the Maryland Department of Agriculture. This program incentivizes state government agencies to purchase 20% of food from local farms. By including blue catfish, this bill creates a more robust market for local watermen and incentivizes the consumption of a healthy, yet invasive product.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association, blue catfish are apex predators that are destabilizing the natural Chesapeake food web by eating native species, including blue crabs and other large fish. Luckily, blue catfish are also nutritious and a regular source of seafood for humans. A 4-ounce serving of blue catfish includes 19 grams of protein, with only 90 calories and 1.5 grams of fat.

We strongly support this bill to count locally-sourced blue catfish toward the goal of sourcing 20% of food from local farms by State agencies. This is a common-sense solution that provides additional variety to local offerings by state agencies, while also creating a more robust market for an invasive species that is destabilizing the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem. **For these reasons, the Montgomery**



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County Food Council supports HBoo63 and urges a FAVORABLE REPORT for this bill.

The Montgomery County Food Council is a nonprofit organization that serves as the primary connection point for businesses, nonprofits, government agencies, and residents around food system issues in our County. We bring together over 2,000 local and regional partners in community-wide education, advocacy, and capacity building initiatives. Our work cultivates a more resilient, sustainable, and equitable local food system by enhancing food access for the over 100,000 at risk for hunger, expanding food education opportunities for all residents, supporting our County's farms and food and beverage businesses, and addressing the impact of local food production, distribution, consumption and recycling on our natural resources

For more information, please contact Massa Cressall, Interim Executive Director, at the email and phone number below.



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