



# CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

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*Environmental Protection and Restoration  
Environmental Education*

## Senate Bill 177

### Procurement - State Department of Education - Control Authority - Local Food Purchasing

**Date:** January 22, 2025

**To:** Senate Budget & Taxation Committee

**Position:** **Favorable**

**From:** Matt Stegman,  
Maryland Staff Attorney

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Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) **SUPPORTS** SB 177 which will permit the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to develop “master contracts” for the procurement of locally-produced and harvested food. Local school districts will then be able to purchase through these master contracts. This approach will make it easier for small farmers, fishers, and other food producers to navigate complex state and local procurement regulations and provide fresher, more nutritious meals to students.

Many small farming operations are at the forefront of implementing regenerative agricultural practices that improve soil health and increase food and water quality. Regenerative agriculture is also key to addressing many issues we face regarding climate change, from reducing greenhouse gases to mitigating flooding caused by more intense storms. Climate-friendly practices, like those practiced at CBF’s Clagett Farm, help us produce food in ways that increase resilience and work with natural systems. Providing smaller operations access to more stable financial opportunities is not just a win for those businesses, schools, and students, but potentially for our soil and waterways as well.

Finally, the bill specifically allows for the procurement of Certified Chesapeake Invasive Species. This will aid in the State’s efforts to combat invasive – and delicious – species like the blue catfish by providing an increased market demand for the fish. Reducing blue catfish populations will support the health of key aquatic species they prey on, most notably menhaden and blue crabs.

**CBF urges the Committee’s FAVORABLE report on SB 177.**

For more information, please contact Matt Stegman, Maryland Staff Attorney, at [mstegman@cbf.org](mailto:mstegman@cbf.org).

Maryland Office • Philip Merrill Environmental Center • 6 Herndon Avenue • Annapolis • Maryland • 21403

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization dedicated to the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay. With over 200,000 members and e-subscribers, including 71,000 in Maryland alone, CBF works to educate the public and to protect the interest of the Chesapeake and its resources.