

SB 428

Chesapeake Bay Legacy Act Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee February 11, 2025

SUPPORT

Senate Bill 428 aims to promote conservation and environmental sustainability in agriculture by establishing the Maryland Leaders in Environmentally Engaged Farming (LEEF) Program. The LEEF Program would promote, among other things, healthy soils practices, on-farm renewable energy, and partnering with food banks and nonprofits to address food insecurity.

The Maryland Food Bank estimates that 1 in 3 Marylanders are at risk of food insecurity. A person who is food insecure does not have consistent access to healthy and nutritious food on any given day, and this problem persists in every area of the state.

The Maryland Food Bank is supportive of efforts to bolster both the resiliency and sustainability of the food system. SB 428 would assist in expanding conservation practices that make the best use of land meant for growing healthy foods on a more consistent basis as well as utilize in-state resources to research effective practices and pass them down to future Maryland farmers. Strengthening our local food system and ensuring that our partners, including local farms, have the resources they need to continue their operations and support the Maryland Food Bank is a top priority of ours.

SB 428 would help support the local food system on several levels, from agriculture practices that will assist farmers in combatting the effects of climate change to working directly with underserved communities to ensure they are not left behind when it comes to food insecurity. By involving the entire food supply chain, Maryland has the opportunity to not only combat wasted food productively and responsibly, but also to strengthen necessary agricultural infrastructure, increase education and awareness, and achieve environmental goals. Legislation like SB 428 is critical in transforming our food system into one that wastes no edible food, strengthens the capacity of organizations and businesses necessary in the food supply chain, and increases the food security of entire communities.

The Maryland Food Bank appreciates your consideration and respectfully requests a favorable report on SB 428.