

ARTHUR ELLIS, CPA
Legislative District 28
Charles County

DEPUTY MAJORITY LEADER

Finance Committee

Senate Chair

Joint Committee on the
Management of Public Funds

Chair, Charles, St. Mary's and Calvert
Counties' Senate Delegation



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Annapolis Office
James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 301
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3616 • 301-858-3616
800-492-7122 Ext. 3616
Arthur.Ellis@senate.state.md.us

District Office
3261 Old Washington Road
Waldorf, Maryland 20602

Sponsor Written Testimony: Favorable
SB 159: State Designations - State Fruit - American Persimmon

February 27, 2025

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

I, Senator Ellis, am excited to introduce Senate Bill 159 entitled, "State Designations - State Fruit - American Persimmon." Senate Bill 159 will designate the American Persimmon, also known as "Diospyros Virginiana" or "fruit of the gods,"¹ as the state fruit for Maryland.

While Maryland has a state flag and state butterfly, Maryland somehow does not have a state fruit. A constituent from my district, Charles County, discovered that Maryland had no state fruit while doing a middle school project and has now led the charge to designate the persimmon as the state fruit of Maryland. Enclosed in my written testimony are letters of support from my constituent and many other Maryland constituents and organizations.² These letters were submitted during the 2024 Maryland General Assembly session.

¹ *Indigenous Peoples' Perspective Project*, Adkins Arboretum, https://www.adkinsarboretum.org/programs_events/ipp/american-persimmon.html (last visited Feb. 27, 2025).

² See e.g., SB74 Committee Testimony, Maryland General Assembly, https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/cmte_testimony/2024/eee/22106_03072024_18129-1.pdf (last visited Feb. 27, 2024); see also, Senate Bill 74, 2024 Maryland General Assembly (available at: <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Details/sb0074?ys=2024RS#details-dropdown-content5>).

The American Persimmon is native to/common in most parts of Maryland³ and has a rich history and taste, making it a stellar option to become the state fruit of Maryland. Part of this history includes use of the persimmon for things like medicine by Indigenous communities and for coffee, medicine, and buttons by Maryland residents and soldiers when trade was disrupted during the civil war.⁴ The persimmon fruit has important health benefits like antioxidants, fiber, and Vitamin A.⁵ The fruit is bitter if eaten before it is ripe, but it is very sweet and enjoyable once it is fully ripe. This rich and complex history and taste of the American persimmon fruit are compelling reasons to designate it as the state fruit for Maryland.

I respectfully ask for a favorable report on Senate Bill 159 to designate the American persimmon as the state fruit of Maryland. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,


Arthur Ellis

³ *Common Persimmon Diospyros Virginiana Linnaeus*, Maryland Biodiversity, <https://www.marylandbiodiversity.com/species/1596> (last visited Feb. 27, 2025).

⁴ See, *Indigenous Peoples' Perspective Project*, Adkins Arboretum, https://www.adkinsarboretum.org/programs_events/ipp/american-persimmon.html (last visited Feb. 27, 2025); see also, C.H. Briand, *The Common Persimmon (Diospyros Virginiana L.): The History of an Underutilized Fruit Tree (16th - 19th Centuries)*, 12(1) HUNTIA 71, 78-80 (2005) (available at: <https://faculty.salisbury.edu/~chbriand/pdfs/huntia05.pdf>).

⁵ Jillian Kubala, *Top 7 Health and Nutrition Benefits of Persimmon*, Healthline (July 27, 2023), <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/persimmon-nutrition-benefits>.