

# Senate Bill 159 Written Testimony.pdf

Uploaded by: Arthur Ellis

Position: FAV

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



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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,"<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup> These letters were submitted during the 2024 Maryland General Assembly session.

<sup>1</sup> *Indigenous Peoples' Perspective Project*, Adkins Arboretum, [https://www.adkinsarboretum.org/programs\\_events/ipp/american-persimmon.html](https://www.adkinsarboretum.org/programs_events/ipp/american-persimmon.html) (last visited Feb. 27, 2025).

<sup>2</sup> See e.g., SB74 Committee Testimony, Maryland General Assembly, [https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/cmt\\_testimony/2024/eee/22106\\_03072024\\_18129-1.pdf](https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/cmt_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 Maryland<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> The persimmon fruit has important health benefits like antioxidants, fiber, and Vitamin A.<sup>5</sup> 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

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

<sup>4</sup> See, *Indigenous Peoples' Perspective Project*, Adkins Arboretum, [https://www.adkinsarboretum.org/programs\\_events/ipp/american-persimmon.html](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>).

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

**Favorable SB0159.pdf**

Uploaded by: Maureen Fine

Position: FAV

**Favorable SB0159** State Designation-State Fruit-American Persimmon (Sen. Ellis sponsor)  
EEE Committee 3/13 1:00 p.m.

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

As a volunteer with the Prince George's County Audubon Wildlife Habitat Program, I ask that you support this bill to designate the American Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*) as the State Fruit of Maryland. As wildlife habitat advisors, we provide guidance and support to homeowners and communities who want to create or improve the wildlife habitat value on their property.

The American Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*) is an excellent plant whose fruit is sought after by humans and wildlife. It was well known by native Americans who used its hard wood, consumed the fruit for food and medicine, and introduced them to European colonists. The genus name, *Diospyros*, translates as "Fruit of the Gods." When ripe, the fruit is edible and delicious, and can be used in jams and baked goods.

But the benefits don't stop there. It is a highly valued wildlife food. Persimmon pollinators include honeybees, bumblebees, little carpenter bees, digger bees, mason bees, leaf cutting bees, and cuckoo bees, etc. The fruits are consumed by bears, deer, coyote, fox, raccoons, opossum, quail, squirrel, wild turkey, and more. The leaves are host to 45 butterfly and moth species. In addition to being a nutritional powerhouse, the American Persimmon is quite hardy and attractive !

With its variety of historic and current uses and benefits, we urge a favorable report on SB 0159.

Maureen Fine  
Habitat Advisor-Prince George's County Wildlife Habitat Program  
Certified Master Naturalist  
2509 Knighthill Lane  
Bowie, MD 20715

# **SB 159 - Letter of Support.docx.pdf**

Uploaded by: Rachel Jones

Position: FAV



# Maryland Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary

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Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor

Kevin M. Atticks, Secretary

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## Maryland Department of Agriculture

### Legislative Comment

**Date: March 12, 2025**

**BILL NUMBER:** SB 159

**SHORT TITLE:** State Designations - State Fruit - Persimmon

**MDA POSITION:** SUPPORT

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The Maryland Department of Agriculture supports SB 74, which establishes the persimmon as Maryland's State Fruit. The American Persimmon or American date plum's name is derived from the Powhatan word "putchamin". Persimmons are the fruits of a group of trees that belong to the ebony family (scientifically called the *Diospyros virginiana*). This species of persimmon is native to Maryland and much of the East Coast in the United States.

The wild American persimmon was well-known by native Americans, who used its hardwood, consumed the fruits, and introduced them to the European colonists. The fruits were dried like prunes for storage. In addition to its unique sweet but tangy flavor, the persimmon has many traditional medicinal uses ranging from treating sore throats and mouths, to indigestion, thrush, and heartburn. A bark infusion of persimmon, alder, white walnut, and wild cherry was used for toothache. The persimmon fruit, which usually ripens in fall, is often used in jams and baked goods. The fruit pulp can be turned into molasses, and the seeds can be turned into a peanut-like oil or roasted and used as a coffee substitute. Dried leaves make a great tea high in vitamin C.

While the majority of the market on persimmons is dominated by the Asian Persimmon in both imports and exports, there is a domestic market for the American Persimmon. The marketing season for fresh persimmons are the fall months of September through December. With a state designation, Maryland could see an increase in demand for American Persimmons. Direct sales through farm stands and farmers markets, community supported agriculture (CSAs), U-pick operations, and other means are potential benefits of the designation and could boost local economies. MDA requests a favorable report on SB 159.

If you have additional questions, please contact Rachel Jones, Director of Government Relations, at [Rachel.Jones2@maryland.gov](mailto:Rachel.Jones2@maryland.gov) or (410) 841-5886.