



Office of The Mayor Celina R. Benitez

1 Municipal Place, Mount Rainier, Maryland 20712 Telephone: (301) 985-6585 MountRainierMD.org

Maryland Senate. Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee.

2 West

Miller Senate Office Building

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Subject: Support for Maryland Senate Bill 74 (2024) Designating Persimmon as the Official State Fruit

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Distinguished Members of the Senate's Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee,

On Behalf of the City of Mount Rainier Mayor and Council, I am writing to wholeheartedly express my enthusiastic support for Maryland Senate Bill 74 (2024), which designates the **Persimmon** as the official state fruit of Maryland. As a native Maryland varietal, the Persimmon has played an integral role in our state's history, culture, and well-being.

The Persimmon has rich Heritage imbedded, it has been intertwined with Maryland's story. From the Native Peoples who first inhabited this land to settlers, Enslaved individuals, and the diverse array of international immigrants who now call Maryland home, the Persimmon has nourished and sustained generations. Its presence is a testament to our shared agricultural heritage.

Maryland faces several food deserts, where fresh, nutritious options are scarce. The Persimmon, with its rich nutritional content and native to Maryland, can be a valuable resource. By planting Persimmon trees in community spaces, we empower residents to access wholesome food and improve their well-being.

The City of Mount Rainier is leading in the efforts in creating a Native Plant network with several cities across the State to not just bring culture to our state but create beautiful green public space, as well incentivizing residents to utilized their front lawns with Native planting. The Persimmon as an example can contributes to reforestation efforts as its canopy coverage benefits our ecosystem, providing shade, habitat, and beauty.

I urge you to support Senate Bill 74 with unwavering enthusiasm. Let the Persimmon symbolize our commitment to nature, health, and unity. Together, we can cultivate a stronger, more vibrant Maryland—one where the Persimmon thrives alongside our shared dreams.

Please feel free to contact me at 301-985-6585 or via email MayorBenitez@MountRainierMD.org if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Celina R. Benitez

Mayor Celina Benitez, City of Mount Rainier