

Maryland General Assembly
House of Delegates
Health and Government Operations Committee
Room 241
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

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

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison, and Distinguished Members of the Health and Government Operations Committee,

I am writing to wholeheartedly express my enthusiastic support for Maryland Senate Bill 74 (2024), which designates the American **Persimmon** as the official state fruit of Maryland.

While some may consider the Pawpaw as a contender for an official Maryland state fruit, it is important to note that it is already recognized as the state fruit of Ohio and Missouri, and efforts have been made in Virginia to designate it as its state fruit. The American Persimmon, on the other hand, stands unclaimed, unique to Maryland, reflecting our distinct cultural and natural landscape.

As a native Maryland varietal, the American Persimmon has played an integral role in our state's history, culture, and well-being.

1. **A Rich Heritage:**

The Persimmon has been intertwined with Maryland's story since time immemorial. 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.

2. **A Culinary Treasure:**

In Maryland's American cuisine, the Persimmon shines. Its sweet, complex flavor graces our tables in puddings, beverages, and baked goods. Across ethnic cuisines, from Asian to European, the Persimmon adds a delightful touch to dishes. Its versatility bridges cultures and connects us through food.

3. **Building Food Connections:**

In our heavily agricultural state, many children have lost touch with the origins of their food. The Persimmon provides an opportunity to reconnect. Imagine children gathering under Persimmon-laden branches, learning about seasons, flavors, and the joy of harvesting. Communal fruit picking fosters a sense of belonging, encourages physical activity, and promotes overall health.

4. **Addressing Food Deserts:**

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

5. **Environmental Stewardship:**

As a native varietal, the Persimmon contributes to reforestation efforts. Its inclusion in grants supports environmental health restoration. Moreover, its canopy coverage benefits our ecosystem, providing shade, habitat, and beauty.

6. **Harmonious Colors:**

The Persimmon's hues—ranging from deep orange to scarlet—perfectly complement Maryland's existing state symbols. Just as our flag, bird, steamed crab, butterfly, and Old Bay spice evoke pride, the Persimmon's colors resonate with our collective identity.

7. **Reconnecting with Nature:**

By adopting the Persimmon as our state fruit, we encourage Marylanders to embrace the outdoors. Whether in orchards, parks, or backyards, let us celebrate the Persimmon and rediscover the beauty of open spaces.

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

Wholeheartedly,

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