



HOUSE BILL 421

Department of Agriculture - Advertising Agricultural Products as Locally Grown - Regulatory Authority

February 18, 2010

POSITION: Support with Amendment

Dear Madame Chair and Members of the Environmental Matters Committee:

On behalf of the members of the *Restaurant Association of Maryland*, we support House Bill 421 with an amendment.

Many of our members and their chefs have responded to consumer demand by highlighting locally-grown produce, meats, seafood and dairy products directly on our menus. In fact, several restaurants have discovered a niche market by selling only locally-sourced foods.

While we strongly support the concept of this bill, we have some concerns about the criteria that the Secretary of Agriculture will use to determine standards that regulate the use of the terms “locally grown” and “local” to advertise or identify agricultural products. For these reasons, we suggest that this bill be amended to require the Secretary to appoint and consider the recommendations of a taskforce or workgroup before adopting such regulations. Such a taskforce or workgroup should include farmers, food distributors and representatives from retail store and foodservice industries. We believe that such a process will result in the adoption of appropriate standards that address the concerns of those involved in promoting locally-grown products from farm to fork.

For these reasons, we request that you pass an amended version of HB 421.

Sincerely,

Melvin R. Thompson
Senior Vice President
Government Affairs and Public Policy