Louisville Nature Center, Inc.

August 21, 2026

Interim Joint Committee on Agriculture
Kentucky General Assembly
700 Capital Avenue
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

Dear Members of the Interim Joint Committee on Agriculture:

As Executive Director of Louisville Nature Center, I am pleased to express our strong support for designating the pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*) as the official State Native Fruit of Kentucky.

The pawpaw is native throughout the Commonwealth and represents an important part of Kentucky's natural and cultural heritage. Generations of Kentuckians have enjoyed gathering pawpaw fruit from the state's woodlands. Today, interest in pawpaw production continues to grow among farmers, nurseries, consumers, chefs, food entrepreneurs, and agritourism operations.

The Louisville Nature Center has helped foster public interest in this native fruit through its Louisville Pawpaw Festival. By bringing together growers, educators, vendors, families, and pawpaw enthusiasts, the festival provides opportunities for visitors to taste pawpaw fruit, learn about its cultural and ecological importance, and discover ways to grow and use it. The festival demonstrates the strong public enthusiasm for pawpaw and its potential to support environmental education, community engagement, and local agriculture.

Designating the pawpaw as Kentucky's official State Native Fruit would increase public awareness of this unique fruit and help create new opportunities for Kentucky growers and small businesses. This recognition could encourage orchard establishment, value-added product development, direct-market sales, festivals, culinary tourism, and other activities that contribute to Kentucky's agricultural economy.

Kentucky State University has provided nationally recognized leadership in pawpaw research, conservation, cultivar development, and grower education for more than three decades. This work has helped establish Kentucky as a national leader in the advancement of pawpaw as an emerging specialty crop.

The pawpaw is well suited to represent Kentucky because it connects our native plant heritage with the future of agricultural innovation and economic development. We respectfully encourage the Kentucky General Assembly to support legislation designating the pawpaw as the official State Native Fruit of the Commonwealth.

Thank you for your consideration of this important initiative.

Sincerely,
Rebecca Minnick

Rebecca Minnick
Executive Director
Louisville Nature Center